PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES AND LAY ACCOUNTS OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AND NURSING UNDERGRADUATES

JAMES MOIR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Council for National Academic Awards for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 1990

Dundee Institute of Technology

JAMES MOIR

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES AND LAY ACCOUNTS OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING AND NURSING UNDERGRADUATES

Psychological investigation of occupational choice has traditionally followed one of two dominant approaches. The structural (or 'personality-matching') approach (e.g., Holland, 1985) has used pysychometric testing to predict occupational choice on the basis of personality assessments whilst the process (or 'developmental') approach (e.g., Ginzberg et al., 1951) has mainly used interview responses to identify stages in the maturation of vocational thinking culminating 'realistic' decision-making.

The aim of this study was to test the utility of these approaches in undertaking a detailed analysis of interview data. Garfinkel's (1967) proposal that decisions can be viewed as the retrospective construction of 'sense-able' accounts provided a useful perspective on collected interview responses. A discourse analysis approach was adopted in which the functional nature of language, as achieving interactive purposes, was stressed (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Finally, use was made of the conversation analytic focus on turn-taking in order to examine the interdependent nature of the question-and-answer turns of the interviews (e.g., Sacks, 1972).

Forty undergraduate students following the BSc courses in mechanical engineering and nursing at Dundee Institute of Technology were interviewed. The sample consisted of twenty students from each course, ten from the first year and ten from the final year. Comparisons were made between the two vocational groups and between first and final year students. A preliminary examination of course selection interviews was also undertaken.

The data could not be categorized in accordance with Holland's 'personality patterns' for mechanical engineering and nursing, nor in terms of Ginzberg's 'realistic stage' of vocational thinking, due to categorization conflicts and within-interview response variability. The apparent contradictions and complexities generated by categorizing responses in these terms were clarified when accounts were analyzed as ongoing constructions of 'sense-able' choices within which 'personality-expressive' and 'developmental-stage' talk served specific conversational functions.

The findings call into question methods of careers guidance based on these theories and it is argued that attention should be directed at career-selection preparation. However, it should be noted that a focus on the conversational skills required to succeed in selection interviews could challenge faith in a meritocratic selection system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank first and foremost my Director of Studies, Dr Charles Abraham, Lecturer in Psychology in the Department of Business Studies, for his assistance in the production of this work. He helped clarify my thinking through many discussions, and through his constructive comments on draft chapters. I am also grateful for his willingness to discuss the project at short notice on several occasions, and for the support and encouragement he provided throughout.

I also wish to extend my thanks to my external adviser, Dr Margaret Wetherell, Lecturer in Social Psychology at the Open University, for her guidance and helpful comments, and also to Dr Ian Glover, my second supervisor before leaving the Institute, for his assistance during the early stages of the work.

I wish to acknowledge the support given by the Institute, and in particular the Department of Business Studies, who provided me with the necessary resources to undertake the project. I am also grateful for the co-operation and assistance I received from the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Centre for Nursing studies in undertaking the empirical work.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to my wife, who not only put up with my preoccupation with the work, but also encouraged me throughout, and especially during those times when it seemed most demanding.

CONTENTS

FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

The study of occupational choice has attracted the attention of psychologists, sociologists and economists. Psychologists, have however, been in the forefront because of the potential of their research to influence careers guidance practice. The psychological study of occupational choice has, in the main, followed two distinct directions. The structural (or 'personality-matching') approach has used psychometric techniques to predict occupational choice on the basis of personality assessments, whilst the process (or 'developmental approach') has used interview responses obtained through cross-sectional and longitudinal research, as a basis for indentifying stages in the development of vocational thinking. The aim of this study was to assess the correspondence between theories derived from these approaches and vocational undergraduates' accounts of their occupational/course choices. A detailed interview analysis technique was adopted because it was regarded as a superior methodology for exploring students' occupational/course choice accounts than, for example, questionnaires.

The investigation is reported on in eleven chapters. The first five chapters lay the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study. Chapter 1 outlines the main theories derived from the personality-matching and developmental approaches, the methodologies they rest upon, and their influence on careers guidance practice. Chapter 2 involves the explication of two key assumptions upon which these theories rest, namely, that occupational choice is explicable primarily in psychological terms, and that the research methods which have been traditionally employed (i.e., inventories, questionnaires and interviews) provide

the means for developing an understanding of the underlying psychological structures or processes involved. These assumptions are critically examined by noting the asocial view of occupational choice which they generate, and by examining the problems involved in using empirical data to reveal psychological processes. Chapter 3 develops an argument for a different approach to the study of occupational choice accounts based on an amalgam of concepts derived from ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and discourse analysis. The approach argued for is one which focuses upon discursive construction and the interactional ends which different constructions serve. These theoretical points are developed into an explanation of the study's methodology in chapter 4 along with a statement of the research questions used to guide the investigation. Chapter 5 details the ways in which the research questions were investigated.

Chapters 6 to 10 report on the empirical findings. In chapter 6 the degree of correspondence between the psychological theories and the data is examined. Chapter 7 applies a discourse analytic perspective to the data in order to explore the conversational function of 'personality-expressive' accounts. Chapter 8 examines the ways in which 'realistic stage' talk is sustained through the question-and-answer sequences of the interview and the conversational functions served by this form accouting. Also examined in this chapter are the functions of what developmentalists such as Ginzberg would categorize as 'fantasy' statements. Chapter 9 considers the extent to which respondents' accounts reveal gender considerations and chapter 10 uses a small number of course selection interviews to explore the ecological

validity of earlier findings.

Chapter 11 considers the conclusions reached in relation to the study of occupational choice accounts and offers advice to interviewees on the basis of the findings. Finally, the wider social and political implications of the study, especially with regard to careers guidance practice, are considered.

CHAPTER 1

PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICE

1.1 Introduction

There have been two main psychological perspectives on occupational choice which have influenced the work of those involved in careers guidance.[1] These are the structural and process approaches (Weinrach, 1979). Structural approaches mainly rely upon psychometric techniques and seek to measure the structure, or content, of individual personalities, work environments, and the degree of congruence between the two. Process approaches are rooted in developmental psychology and seek to study the maturation of occupational decision-making ability, mainly through the examination of interview data.

Holland's (1959, 1966, 1973, 1985) theory is dominant amongst the structural approaches. The central idea of his theory is that people select work environments consistent with their personalities, of which there are six dominant types along with their corresponding environments. This view of occupational choice has for many years typified the British approach to careers guidance (Clarke, 1980; Watts et al., 1981), with careers advisers attempting to 'match' individuals with the types of jobs they are found to be best suited to.

The main proponents of the process approach have been Ginzberg (Ginzberg et al., 1951; Ginzberg, 1972) and Super (Super 1953, 1957, 1980). Their theories present occupational choice as an unfolding maturational process involving normative age-graded

stages leading to an ability for 'realistic' choice-making. This view has gained increasing acceptance in Britain in recent years and has led to the view that careers guidance is a long-term process involving an educational and counselling input (e.g. Watts, 1977).

This chapter describes these theories, the main assessment instruments and methods used in researching them, and their influence on careers guidance practice.

1.2 The structural approach: Holland's personality types

1.2.1 The theory

Holland (1959) set forth his view of occupational choice based on the idea that different personality types are attracted to different work environments. Over the years he has refined the theory, although its basic principles have remained unaltered. In *Making Vocational Choices* (Holland, 1985, p.2-4) he reiterates the four axioms around which his theory is organized:

> (1) In our culture, most persons can be categorized as one of six types: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional.
>
> (2) There are six model environments: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional.
>
> (3) People search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles.
>
> (4) Behaviour is determined by an interaction between personality and environment.

Holland derived his personality typology from the factor analysis of responses to several interest inventories gathered over time. Hence the types are described in terms of interests and aversions. Holland (1985, pp.19-23) describes them as follows:

> Realistic - a preference for activities that entail the explicit ordered, or systematic manipulation of objects, tools, machines, and animals; and an aversion to educational or therapeutic activities (e.g., mechanic, farmer, lorry driver).
>
> Investigative - a preference for activities that entail the observational, symbolic, systematic, and creative investigation of physical, biological, and cultural phenomena in order to understand and control such phenomena; and an aversion to persuasive, social, and repetitive activities (e.g., scientist, designer, engineer).
>
> Artistic - a preference for ambiguous, free, unsystematized activities that entail the manipulation of physical, verbal, or human materials to create art forms or products; and an aversion to explicit, systematic, and ordered activities (e.g., artist, writer, musician).
>
> Social - a preference for activities that entail the manipulation of others to inform, train, develop, cure, or enlighten; and an aversion to explicit, ordered, systematic activities involving materials, tools, or machines (e.g., teacher, nurse, counsellor).
>
> Enterprising - a preference for activities that involve the manipulation of others to attain organizational goals or economic gain; and an aversion to observational, symbolic, and systematic activities (e.g., politician, salesperson, buyer).
>
> Conventional - a preference for activities that entail the explicit ordered systematic manipulation of data, such as keeping records (etc.); and an aversion to ambiguous, free, exploratory, or unsystematized activities (e.g., accountant, adiministrative assistant, statistician).

These descriptions of personalities also apply to work environments since the assumption is made that "the dominant features of an environment reflect the typical characteristics of its members" (Holland, 1985, p.34). Therefore an environment consists of the distribution of types within it. However, this view is quailified on three counts. First, Holland notes that environments are seldom

homogeneous. Second, he argues that the sub-units that make up an environment (e.g., different departments in a large organization) should be taken into account since they can exert a dispropotionate influence. Third, he argues that some individuals within an environment will have more influence than others and thereby shape the environment despite often being outnumbered.

Holland's theory can be summed up by the old adage that birds of a feather flock together. However, this apparently simple idea has been refined to provide a more complex view of individual personality types. Correlational research has provided the basis for a model in which the types are related to one another in a closed loop (commonly presented in diagramtic form as a hexagon) in the the following order: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. It is argued that adjacent types are more closely related to one another than those which are more distant from each other. 'Personality patterns', or subtypes, represent particular combinations of the six personality types and are expressed in terms of a two or three-type code. A person is said to be 'consistent' if the elements of his or her subtype are adjacent and share common characteristics. For example, a 'realistic-investigative' person is said to be consistent because these elements have common characteristics such as unsociability, an orientation toward things and self-deprecation. On the other hand, a 'conventional-artistic' person is said to be 'inconsistent' because the characteristics of this sub-type are conflicting; conformity and originality, control and expressiveness, business and art. If a person has one type which is dominant then he or she is said to be 'differentiated'.

1.2.2 Assessment instruments and research methods

A large number of studies have been conducted by Holland and others in testing elements of the theory, the extensiveness of which has has been recognized by other reviewers (e.g., Crites, 1969; Osipow, 1973). Many of these studies have involved the assessment of personality types using Holland's Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) (1958) or Self-Directed Search (SDS) (1971, 1972).[2]

For Holland, a person's interests and aversions, as measured through such interest inventories, represent an expression of personality. Thus he has stated that "vocational interests, vocational choices, and characteristics of people in related occupations are mainfestations of a common personal disposition or construct" (1976a, p.522). "A common set of dimensions or catergories can not only be obtained from these highly correlated methods - vocational interests, choices, and occupational membership - but also many of their correlates - aptitudes, competencies, self-ratings - which are domains normally assumed to be divergent" (p.528).

The VPI is a measure of a person's preferred occupations and consists of 160 occupational titles. The inventory is completed by indicating those occupations which are liked or disliked. Each occupation is assigned to one of the environmental types. Thus the VPI consists of six groups of occupations, one for each environmental type. By noting the number of occupations chosen in each group a personality pattern can be constructed. Thus the like

and dislike responses are used as projective data about respondents and are taken to be representative of major personality characteristics. In discussing the basis of the VPI Holland argues that

> The choice of an occupation is an expressive act which reflects the person's motivation, knowledge, personality, and ability. Occupations represent a way of life, an environment rather than a set of isolated work functions or skills... the choice of an occupational title represents several kinds of information: the subject's motivation, his knowledge of the occupation in question, his insight and understanding of himself, and his abilities. In short, item responses may be thought of as limited but useful expressive or projective protocols. (Holland, 1985, p.8)

The SDS was developed on the basis VPI and yields a similar personality profile. Although also an interest inventory, it includes self-ratings of abilities and reported competencies. The self-assessment booklet consists of five sections: occupational daydreams, activities, competencies, occupations, and self-estimates. The occupational daydreams section requires respondents to list those occupations which they daydream about along with any that they may have discussed with others. In the activities section there are a number of statements which are related to Holland's six categories (e.g., "sketch, draw or paint" corresponds to the artistic type) and respondents are required to indicate those activities they like or dislike. The competencies section is similar to the previous section except that the items are descriptions of skills or proficiencies with respondents indicating those they can do well or competently and those that feel they do poorly in or have never done. The VPI is incorporated in the SDS as the occupations section. The final section, self-estimates, requires two sets of ratings on seven-point scales of 14 abilities. Each of these scales yields a three-type code

which are then compiled into a summary code.

As already mentioned, there have been a number of studies conducted to test predictions derived from Holland's theory. Although the present investigation does not require a review of this literature because it focuses on the methodology and basic assumptions inherent in the approach, it is nevertheless useful to consider some of the main findings which have been derived from studies which have used the VPI and SDS.

Much of Holland's early work involved a highly select group of high school students (National Merit finalists) whose VPI scale scores were correlated with other personal characteristics in order to establish the distinctiveness of the types. For example, Holland (1962) found an association between students' VPI scores and vocational preferences, aptitudes, self-ratings, extracurricular activities, academic interests, non-academic achievements and personality variables (16 PF). Only partial support was found for the prediction that that individuals choose work environments congruent with their personality types. Career fields were assigned as belonging to a particular environment, largely on an intuitive basis. It was found on the basis of VPI scale scores and career preferences that the majority of realistic, investigative and social subjects preferred careers within their predicted fields. Subjects who were categorized as being enterprising were found to prefer as many careers in the realistic field as their own. Artistic subjects were found to prefer realistic and social careers more frequently than careers in their own field. Conventional subjects were found to prefer a

preponderance of investigative careers.

A later study by Holland (1968) involved a large sample of college freshmen (1,576 men and 1,571 women) varied in terms of academic ability and social status. Holland related types (derived from VPI profiles) to 22 dependent variables including competencies, life goals, self-ratings and personality and attitudinal variables. Differences were found across subtypes; smaller for three-type codes than two-type codes. However, only a slight relationship was found between consistency (i.e., the relatedness of the elements of a subtype) and stability of choice.

Holland's congruence hypothesis has been tested by others in a number of more recent studies involving student populations. In a study by Utz and Hartman (1978) it was found that SDS scores distinguished between different specialities chosen by students majoring in business. Students specializing in accounting were differentiated from those in marketing and behavioural studies. Bruch and Krieshok (1981) tested the hypothesis by studying engineering freshmen on a course in which there was an emphasis on theoretical mathematics and science. Students were assumed to be in a congruent environment if they were found to be principally investigative types. Students who were categorized as being realistic types or who had a tied realistic-investigative profile were predicted to be in a less congruent environment. It was found after two years that the investigative types showed greater persistence and attained higher grades despite the groups being matched on general and mathematical aptitudes.

Much of the testing Holland's theory, and in particular the congruence hypothesis, has relied upon student samples. Super (1981) has criticized this on the grounds that preferences and not actual occupational choices have been used as the criterion variable. Therefore it is not congruence between personality types and occupations which has principally been tested but rather, between personality types and their occupational conceptions at the time of being asked to state a preference. Predictive validity studies have been conducted but are uncommon. An example of such a study by O'Neil et al. (1978) involved freshmen who were ascertained as being investigative types in 1970 and were seven years later the subject of a questionnaire study. It was found that graduate major, ideal and projected career plans, and actual job entered were congruent with their type.

1.2.3 Influence on careers guidance

The structural approach has held sway in Britain for many years, although it has not been so closely bound up with formal theory. Traditionally the emphasis has been upon 'matching' individuals with the kinds of occupations they are found to be best suited to in terms of their interests and aptitudes. The the work of the careers adviser has therefore involved 'fitting square pegs into square holes' and as such their role has been a directive one in that they suggest possible jobs to clients. Holland has recognized this role for the careers adviser by stating that the "consumers of vocational counselling want most of all to arrive at or confirm one or more vocational alternatives they feel good about" (1976b, p.13).

Both the VPI and SDS have been used extensively by careers advisers in the United States with the SDS in particular attracting much attention in recent years because of its 'do-it-yourself' approach. After completing the inventory the accompanying Occupations Finder which contains 1,156 occupational titles, is used to those occupations which match an individual's summary code. In Britain, however, the use of such interest inventories has been limited despite the pre-eminence of the matching model of careers guidance. Hopson (1968) suggested that confusion about which tests to select and the interpretation of their results has contributed to this antipathy towards their usage. However, more recent evidence from a study of further education colleges and polytechnics suggest that their application is now more widespread due to developments in computer technology (Stoney and Scott, 1984). Thus the basic task of the careers adviser is still to use the results of such tests, along with other relevant information such as academic performance, to match individuals with occupations consistent with their stated dispositions.

1.3 The process approach: Ginzberg and Super's developmental stages

1.3.1 The theories

In *Occupational Choice* Ginzberg et al. (1951) advanced a developmental theory based on the view that there are normative age-graded stages leading to an occupational choice. Accordingly it is seen as a process which takes place over several years. Three stages are specified in the theory: fantasy, tentative and realistic. The fantasy stage extends from approximately 6 to 11,

the tentative from approximately 11 to 17, and the realistic from 18 years onwards. The underlying theme of this approach is therefore the maturation of the individuals's capacity for 'realistic' occupational decision-making. In Ginzberg's theory this is explained in terms of concepts drawn from psychoanalytic ego psychology which are used in effect to depict the victory of the 'reality-principle' over the 'pleasure-principle'.

The fantasy stage is characterized by the expression of occupational choice in terms of the child's wish to be an adult. As such Ginzberg argued that during this period choices, or more accurately preferences, are translates of impulses and needs and do not involve any self-assessment of capacities or the realities of the employment market. Interest forms the main criterion for the expression of occupational choice during this period. Thus children of this age choose those occupations which appeal to them on the basis of things which interest them, which they enjoy doing or acting out in play, and which seem glamorous or adveturesome. For example, it common to hear a child talking about wanting to be a police officer, or a nurse, or a scientist. The content of these choices may vary according to the environment in which the child is reared (e.g., the influence of parental occupations).

The tentative stage is subdivided into four substages: interest, capacity, value and transition. These substages represent the adolescent's shifting basis for his or her choice and involve a growing awareness of both intra-individual and extra-individual factors that will affect the outcome. Initially interests are the primary basis for choice but there is the

realization that abilities are also needed. Following the interest substage, individual capacities are taken into account, for example, academic performance in school subjects. However, knowledge of capacities are seen as being incomplete and therefore choices are tentative. Next, values enter into the process. There is an awareness that society attaches different values to different occupations in terms of, for example, status and financial rewards. There is also the realization that the choice of an occupation involves the choice of a particular set of values. In the final transition substage these factors are brought together and the adolescent becomes aware that a decision is impending. By this time the individual has become

> aware more and more of the complex structure of reality with its job hierarchy, variety of working conditions, specific conditions of entrance into occupations, various income and security factors and the host of allied elements which are part of the working world (1951, p.196).

The realistic stage consists of three substages: exploration, crystallization, and specification. During the exploratory substage stock is taken of past decisions and particular occupations are investigated. This might, for example, involve finding out about educational or vocational courses that lead to certain occupations. In the crystallization substage a commitment is made to enter an occupation whilst the specification substage involves the choice of a specific job.

Although these stages are seen as being general to the development of all individuals, Ginzberg notes that there are some who do not fit the general pattern, particularly in late adolescence. The crystallization of a choice within a few years of

the norm is regarded as a 'variation' whereas the failure to crytallize a choice at all or at a much later age than normal is regarded as a 'deviation'. Ginzberg regards 'pseudocrystallization' as the most important factor in delayed crystallization. This is when a choice is made at the normal time of around 17 or 18, but which is based on parental pressures, fantasies, or interests. According to Ginzberg, this form of choice brings about dissatisfaction later on when the individual becomes aware that it does not reflect a combination of his or her interests, capacities and values; the result being a lack of specification.

Ginzberg (1972) has modified the theory by suggesting that the process is lifelong and open-ended. Individuals are viewed as being engaged in an ongoing process which involves finding the the optimal fit between occupational preparation, preferences and opportunities. A greater emphasis is also placed on constraints such as family income and situation, parental attitudes and values, employment opportunities and value orientations. However, despite these modifications the developmental basis of the theory has remained intact.

In *The Psychology of Careers* Super (1957) put forward his own extended developmental theory but stressed the importance of an individual's social environment and self-concept in vocational development. He specified five progressive stages in the life-cycle although, like Ginzberg, he has been mainly concerned with initial entry into employment and the development of realistic decision-making. The five stages in Super's theory can be

summarized as follows:

(1) Growth (birth - 14)

This stage is generally comparable with Ginzberg's fantasy stage but also overlaps with his tentative stage. Thus during the early part of this stage the child operates in terms of needs and fantasy whilst interests and capacities become more prominent in adolescence.

(2) Exploration (15 - 24)

This stage straddles Ginzberg's tentative and realistic stages. There are three substages: (i) a tentative substage in early and middle adolescence, when there is the identification of possible fields and levels of work although as yet no specific occupational choice; (ii) a transition substage in late adolescence and early adulthood, when the person either enters the employment market or continues in tertiary education; (iii) a trial substage in early adulthood, when the person enters an occupation, although with provisional commitment which may be strengthened or weakened by job experience. Throughout this stage Super emphasizes the importance of the development of the individual's self-concept which is influenced first by home and school experiences, and then by work experience.

(3) Establishment (25 - 44)

Super identifies two substages here: (i) a stabilization substage, when having acquired training and work experience the person makes a commitment to a specific occupation in which to become established; (ii) an advancement substage, when the person may specialize through, for example, gaining additional qualifications or attaining a senior position. During this stage Super views the self-concept as being modified and implemented.

(4) Maintenance (45 - 64)

During this stage the person maintains a steady hold upon what has been established in the previous stage. The self-concept is preserved.

(5) Decline (65+)

During this stage there is a deceleration in the pace of work activity followed by retirement. The person must adjust to a new self-concept.

Super has provided a diagramatic comparison his extended view of the developmental process with that of Ginzberg's (Figure 1, Super in Hopson and Hayes, 1968, p.21).

Fig. 1 The Main Stages of Vocational Development Described by Super and Ginzberg

SUPER			GINZBERG	
		Age		
		0		
		4		
	Fantasy			FANTASY
GROWTH				
	Interest	11	Interest	
	Capacity		Capacity	TENTATIVE
		15		
	Tentative		Value	
		17]	Transition	REALISTIC
	Transition		Exploration	
EXPLORATION			Crystallization	
		21	Specification	
	Trial			
		25		
ESTABLISHMENT	Specialization			
		45		
MAINTENANCE				
	Deceleration			
		65		
DECLINE				
	Retirement			

Although Super's stages represent an extension of Ginzberg's theory he has also formulated developmental concepts that are of particular importance for careers guidance. For example, Super et al. (1957) referred to the 'developmental tasks' that an individual must accomplish before successful transition to the next stage of vocational development. The sequence of developmental tasks postulated for adolescence and early adulthood are given by Super and Bohn (1970) as follows: (1) crystallizing a vocational preference, (2) specifying it, (3) implementing it (4) stabilizing in the chosen occupation, (5) consolidating one's status, and (6) advancing in the occupation.

A related concept is a person's 'vocational maturity' which can be viewed in either of two ways. First, it can refer to the stage that an individual is at (as evidenced by the developmental tasks being encountered) compared with the stage he or she might be expected to be at in terms of age. Secondly, it can refer to how a person is coping with the developmental tasks of a particular stage regardless of his or her age. Thus the rate and progress of an individual's vocational development are assumed to be assessable.

More recently Super (1980) has provided a decision-making model for specifc decision-points within his theory of career stages. He envisages the vocationally mature person as being able to carry out a series of steps which are analogous to his theory of career stages. Thus decision-making is seen as following a pattern of (1) growth - an awareness of an impending decision , (2) exploration - alternatives are explored and evaluated, (3) establishment - a course of action is undertaken, (4) maintenance -

seeing the plan through, and (5) decline - this stage may occur when the individual cannot meet certain requirements after a course of action has been undertaken and so a new decision-point is reached.

1.3.2 Assessment instruments and research methods

The notion of a staged development involving increasing realism of choice has not received a great deal of empirical support. The assessment of degree of realism of choice has been based on either judges' ratings or discrepancy scores (Jordaan, 1974). Judges' ratings may be based on interview or questionnaire responses, or a knowledge of particular individuals (e.g., by careers advisers). Discrepancy methods involve the comparison of measured abilities, interests, and indicators of socio-economic class, with stated choices. Most studies have either used interviewing on its own as means of assessing realism of choice or have combined this method with discrepancy methods. Examples of the different research techniques used to assess the degree of realism in the vocational thinking of adolescents are discussed below.

Ginzberg's initial research was conducted with a sample of 91 young people between the ages of 11 and 24 who were mainly male, of relatively high socio-economic status and educationally successful. Ginzberg argued that this allowed him to study the occupational choice process more clearly as these individuals had few restrictions which would delimit their choices.

Interviews were conducted in order to explore respondents' vocational thinking. Topics for discussion included: (1) the self: capacities, interests, values and time perspective, (2) reality: family, environment, world of work and life plan, (3) key persons: parents, siblings, relatives, peers, neighbours and teachers. These topics provided the framework for semi-structured interviews, although the researchers also took account of other factors mentioned by the respondents. Respondents were only interviewed once and Ginzberg and his associates extracted 'qualitative differences' in their thinking from these interviews. However, no data is advanced in support of the developmental concepts that were postulated and thus his initial theoretical statements have been viewed as being being somewhat 'tentative' (e.g., Neff, 1977).

The empirical work conducted on the timing of the developmental stages has yielded mixed support. Davis et al. (1962) asked a sample of 116 boys and girls, whose average age was 12 (with a range of 11 to 16), to write a paragraph about their career preferences. These were then categorized according to whether they revealed fantasy or tentative thinking. It was found that whilst most girls (74 per cent) could be categorized as having tentative choices less than half the boys (41 per cent) could be said to be at the same stage. These findings were interpreted as indicating that Ginzberg's age boundary for the fantasy stage is too low for boys. O'Hara and Tiedeman (1959) in a study of boys from the 9th to the 12th grade found support for Ginzberg's tentative stage although they note that awareness of interests and work values develop throughout the period rather than as distinct substages. Tucci (1963) found that college students who said they

had a definite vocational plans reported making their choices at around age 14, and those who said they had tentative plans at around age 15. In both cases these ages were much earlier than Ginzberg's theory would predict. Finally, a longitudinal study by Gribbons and Lohnes (1968) suggested that the role of values in vocational decision-making occurs earlier than the period defined by Ginzberg.

A study by Small (1953) contradicted Ginzberg's view of the progression towards realistic occupational decision-making during adolescence. The choices of 50 'normal' and 50 'maladjusted' boys between the ages of 15 and 19 were investigated. He interpreted realism of choice in terms of ego strength and tested the hypothesis that "individuals with different ego strengths will show differences in the use they make of reality and wishful fantasy in making vocational choices" (1953, pp.1-2). Small therefore made the assumption that differences in the level of adjustment between the two groups of boys reflected different ego strenghts. It was expected that the older, 'normal' boys would show a greater reliance on 'reality' rather than 'fantasy' considerations in their choices.

Realism of choice was assessed in two ways. One method involved the comparison of counsellors' ratings of the boys' personal characteristics with the job requirements of their chosen occupations. The other was the 'job-concept interview', a semi-structured interview designed to elicit the 'fantasy' content of the respondents' vocational thinking. Questions were aimed at exploring vocational aversions and the reasons for them,

respondents' conceptions of their chosen occupations, their notions of what a typical day in these occupations would entail, their views on those in the occupations as well as what they thought the attitudes of families, friends and society in general were towards people in these jobs, and finally, what their occupational daydreams were. Contrary to expectations, both groups of boys showed signs of basing their choices upon fantasy as well as upon reality considerations. Moreover, no linear relationship was found between age and increasing realism of choice.

Katz and Martin (1962) also cast some doubt on the notion of realistic occupational decision-making in a study involving student nurses. Although they did not actually set out to test Ginzberg's theory, they provided an alternative perspective which challenges the notion of realism of choice. They stated that the main difference between their own perspective and Ginzberg's was as follows:

> Whereas his focus is upon career choices as seen in the context of of the individual's maturation, we suggest career choices as courses of action which are composites of adaptations... to meet the exigencies of particular, immediate situations (1962, p. 149).

Questionnaires which included free-response items were administered to students. It was found that over a quarter of the students provided vague or uncertain answers about when they had 'definitely' decided on nursing as a career. These students either indicated that they 'had always' wanted to do the sort of work they thought nursing involved, or that they were not sure when they decided. Katz and Martin regarded at least some of these responses

as "relatively accurate descriptions of a series of unplanned, situation-bound acts" which led students to enter a nursing course. Two other findings were provided to substantiate this claim. First, it was found that most students indicated that they decided to study nursing in the period immediately prior to course entry (age 16 or 17), or in the early years of their course (age 18 to 20). Secondly, it was found that those students who placed themselves in the 'under 16' age category were the ones most likely to complete the course. On the basis of these findings Katz and Martin argued that many of the students who reported 'definite' career decisions were actually referring to decisions revolving around the choice of college education, not choice of occupation.

A more recent test of Ginzberg's notion of increasing realism in occupational decision-making was conducted by Howell et al. (1977). They interpreted the notion of realism as meaning that

> individuals modify their expectations for future occupational attainment on the basis of their occupational aspirations, perceived 'goal-blockage', occupational knowledge, and social origin (p.335).

Panel data from a sample of male students who were interviewed in 1966 when they were in the 10th grade (age 16) and again in 1968 when they were in the 12th grade (age 18) was examined using path anlaytic models. Variables taken into account included parental socio-eonomic status, knowledge of occupational role rewards and requirements, awareness of labour dynamics, perceived goal-blockages (e.g., national or local scarcity of 'good' jobs), occupational aspirations, and occupational expectations. The researchers reported that the perception of 'reality factors' was significantly influenced by social background but that perceived

goal-blockages did not appear, in general, to lower occupational expectations. It was concluded on the basis of these findings that Ginzberg's view of the development of realistic decision-making was not supported.

Super's main contribution has come from a 21-year longitudinal study of the occupational careers of approximately 300 boys known as the Career Pattern Study. The study began in 1951 and involved the collection of data when the subjects were aged 15, 18, 25, and 36. Its origins lay in trait-and-factor theory so that initially psychometric data was collected from a battery of achievement and interest tests. However, many of these measures were regarded as inappropriate for the assessment of 'vocational maturity' and therefore interviews were mainly used for this purpose. In the initial phase of the study subjects were interviewed four times, the subject of each interview being: (1) free time, (2) reaction to school, (3) familial relationships, and (4) vocational plans (Super et al., 1957).

Jordaan (1974) noted that the results of the second round of data collection (i.e., when the subjects were 18) showed that whilst the subjects were more informed about the occupations which interested them, their preferences were not more realistic than their earlier ones. About half of the subjects indicated preferences that were at odds with their socio-economic circumstances, measured interests and ability levels. In addition, it was found that most knew relatively little about the occupations they intended to enter, that only half had well-thought-out plans for preparing for occupational entry, and that very few had

well-thought-out plans for getting the required training, education, or initial job.

1.3.3 Influence on careers guidance

Careers advisers favouring a developmental approach do not view careers guidance as being limited to a specific decision-point but rather as a progressive process which facilitates the maturation of vocational thinking. Accordingly careers guidance has come to be viewed in educational terms. For example, Watts (1977) suggested that careers education in higher education should aim to facilitate four outcomes: opportunity awareness, self-awareness, decision learning and transition learning. These outcomes are related in that opportunity awareness and self-awareness lead to decision learning which in turn leads to transition learning. Opportunity awareness requires knowledge of the world of work and the different kinds of rewards and satisfactions that different occupations can offer. Self-awareness involves the clarification of an individual's interests and values. Programmes for decision learning have been suggested by Katz (1966) and Gellat (1962) based on the assumption that individuals should be helped to achieve a more rational basis for their occupational choices. Finally, transition learning involves arriving at a realistic appreciation of the work environment into which the individual is about to enter.

A second and associated outcome of the developmental approach to careers guidance has been the emphasis placed on a more open-ended and client-centered stance rather than the traditional prescriptive-advising approach. Advisers can, through a series of

interviews, help clients through a particular stage of development although they do not act as decision-makers. In order to facilitate this task measures of career maturity have been developed with the results being used to point out aspects of vocational decision-making in which clients require assistance. For example, much of Super's data from the Career Pattern Study has been intercorrelated and factor-analyzed in order to find the best measures of voational maturity. This in turn has led to the construction of the Career Development Inventory of which there is a school and college form. The College and University Form (Super et al., 1981) yields five basic scales: (1) career planning - a self-report scale on career planning being undertaken, (2) career exploration - a self-report scale on the student's attitude towards assistance in career planning and the degree of help already obtained, (3) decision-making - sketches of career development situations which are used to assess the student's decision-making capacity, (4) world of work information - the assessment of career development tasks and knowledge of the occupational structure, and (5) knowledge of preferred occupational group - a test of the student's knowledge of various aspects of his or her preferred occupation (e.g., job characteristics and training required).

CHAPTER 2

FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ASSOCIATED PROBLEMS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically examines two inter-locking assumptions common to the two main psychological approaches: (1) that occupational choice can be explained primarily in psychological terms, and (2) that responses derived from inventories, questionnaires or interviews can be used to reveal the proposed psychological structures or processes involved. The first assumption gives rise an asocial view of occupational choice, and the second ignores the social significance of subjects' responses in using them as a means of uncovering the psychological basis of occupational choice.

2.2 Occupational choice as a psychological phenomenon

2.2.1 The structural approach

Holland's personality-matching approach hinges on the assumption that people possess a set of interests and attitudes which make up distinct personality types. These interests and attitudes predispose individuals in such a way that they choose work environments which are congruent with their personality types. The exact nature of the process involved in choosing an occupation is unspecified in his theory.

A key feature of this approach is its static nature. Individuals are viewed as possessing relativley fixed

characteristics (Sonnenfeld and Kotter, 1982). As Herriot (1984) has pointed out, this approach is embodied in our everyday language in that we assume persons can be described in terms of various characteristics which are thought of as being (un)suitable for particular occupations. Thus we may generalize about individuals by referring to them as sociable, or patient, etc., and assume that they are this way across a variety of social situations. In addition, we implicitly assume that people remain true to our descriptions of them over time. Jones and Nesbitt (1972) predict this kind of 'personality' error when they point out that people attribute the causes of behaviour to the individual rather environmental factors.

Similarly work environments are assumed to be static and therefore describable in terms of the tasks they involve and the characteristics required to undertake them. Often stereotypical views of occupations are employed to describe the characteristics of their members, for example, we may say that nurses are caring people. Holland's theory employs the same view in that certain personality characteristcs are thought to be representative of certain occupations.

2.2.2 The process approach

Central to the process approach is a theorized maturation in our capacity for 'realistic', or rational occupational choice. This is viewed as occuring naturally; an unfolding process involving distinct stages. Divisions between the stages are based upon hypothesized qualitative differences in vocational thinking. As

people mature they pass through each of the stages in a similar fashion to the Piagetian stages of cognitive development. Thus each stage is viewed as incorporating the development of the preceeding one. As Ginzberg et al. (1951, p.185) concludes:

> Occupational choice is a developmental process: it is not a single decision, but a series of decisions made over a period of years. Each step in the process has a meaningful relation to those which precede and follow it.

2.3 The expression of occupational choice

The second major assumption common to these approaches is that responses to being asked about occupational choice are expressions of underlying psychological structures or processes. By asking people to indicate their choices in either spoken (interviews) or written (questionnaires or interest inventories) forms, the assumption is made that the underlying psychological features can be revealed through an examination of their responses. In the case of the psychometric approach, interest inventories and questionnaires are used to elict a person's personality type. Those who take a developmental approach commonly use an individual's interview responses to determine his or her stage of vocational development, or maturity, by examining of the kinds of choice factors mentioned.

Potter and Wetherell (1987) have argued that this kind of research rests upon a 'realistic' view of language since people are assumed to be giving a straightforward account of what or how they are thinking. Contingent upon this view is the assumption that

people's responses are more or less consistent, both within and across different social contexts and that they serve no other purpose beyond expression. In other words, this kind of research assumes that we are what Potter et al. (1984) refer to as 'honest souls'.

2.4 The asocial nature of the psychological approaches

The psychological theories of occupational choice are, by their very nature, asocial in that they tend to exaggerate the power of individual decision-making. The most sustained attack on the developmental theories on this point has been conducted by Roberts (e.g. 1968, 1975, 1981). In his 1975 paper he argued that the main fault of the developmental approach lies in "treating an individual's occupational choices as unrealistically central processes in the course of their vocational development" (p.138). Although both Ginzberg and Super do refer to the effects of the environment (e.g., parental socio-economic level and opportunities in the job market) in shaping people's occupational choices, it is within the context of the maturation of vocational thinking. Such factors are viewed in secondary terms within the context of the maturation of occupational choice-making ability.

Roberts (1981) has questioned the whole notion of 'choice' in the developmental theories. Although not implying that people have no scope for individual choice, he is sceptical of the centrality of this view and has argued that social-influence factors are the major determinants of the occupations people enter. He has backed up his argument by noting, for example, the work of Ashton and

Field (1976) which has drawn attention to the way in which young people's expectations concerning their future employment are governed to a large extent by their socio-economic background and experience of 'success' or 'failure' at school.

Roberts (1975) also criticized careers guidance based on the developmental approach. He argued that it should focus upon the 'opportunity structures' to which individuals have access rather than attempting to improve their decision-making capacities. He has therefore suggested that guidance should concentrate upon providing information about the kind jobs that are actually open to certain groups of young people. He argues that

> Guidance problems are posed basically by occupational realities as they impinge upon specific groups of individuals, rather than by the internal dynamics of psychological growth (1975, p.143)

Roberts' critique can also be applied to Holland's theory. Environmental factors are viewed by Holland as interfering with, or distorting, a person's dominant personal orientation towards a work environment. Factors such as family aspirations and occupational history, financial resources and opportunities in the employment market are seen as influencing the ease with which an individual arrives at a choice of occupation (Osipow, 1973). However, it personality which is viewed as directing the choice process.

2.5 Problems in using inventories, questionnaires and interviews

2.5.1 Interest inventories and questionnaires

Holland's theory is based on the use of subjects' responses to interest inventories or questionnaires as a means of revealing

their personality types. Responses may be classified according to a two-type or three-type code which may show contrasting aspects of personality, but this approach assumes nonetheless that these traits are static, fixed dispositions. No allowance is made for individuals to provide contrasting responses to particular items. As such the construction of such tests do not allow for the detection of any variability within items (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Moreover, they do not take account of the fact that that the expression of personality may alter with the type of data-gathering technique used and respondents' views of it. In other words, the context in which people account for their choices (be it inventory, questionnaire or interview) may determine the view they give of themselves.

2.5.2 Interviews

Consider the following extracts from an interview transcript of a first year student accounting for her entry into undergraduate nurse training:

(a)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Well, last year I worked as a technician and from then I was drawn more from the technical side of things towards the patient kind of thing. I wanted to know what was going to happen to a patient rather than just testing this and testing that, I wanted to know the results of these tests and what we could do for it.

(b)

Int: You say for as long as you can remember, how far can you trace it back?

Resp: I really don't know, maybe eight or nine. I think I can remember being in hospital when I was about that age. I just remember these people flashing about in white uniforms and they were always very very nice. I thought I want to be like

that as well, I want to be nice.

Int: So that's what drew you into nursing, you wanted to be nice?

Resp: Well you see them as, you know, they do look nice and they have - they look nice and they talk to you nicely.

Int: And you want to be like that?

Resp: Yes, I want to be like that.

Based on a reading of extract (a) it might be said that this individual conforms to Ginzberg's realistic stage of vocational development. Reference is made to interests and experiences gained from working as a technician. However extract (b) suggests that she may be operating according to the fantasy stage. Here the criterion of choice is looking and talking "nicely" (i.e., a glamorous aspect of the work).

How can this individual be assigned to one of the stages of vocational thinking? One approach would be to ignore the second extract so as to assign her to her age-appropriate (realistic) stage. This can be achieved if extract (b) is treated as being unrepresentative of the interview as a whole. However as Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.42) argue, such a selective reading poses serious analytic problems:

> The great danger here is that the researcher making the selections will simply mirror his or her prior expectation. In this situation the data can be used to buttress the favoured analytic story rather than being used to critically evaluate it.

In the previous chapter it was noted that the developmental approach has received little support for its claims about realism of choice. For example, Small's (1953) study cast some doubt upon being able to show the operation of purely realistic thinking in

adolescent boys. He chose not to to 'filter out' fantasy-type responses but investigated them through his 'job-concept interview'.

The main point being made here is that both the evidence for or against the theory relies upon a realistic model of discourse. Researchers have therefore not addressed the fundamental problem of variability in responses and have tended to analyze data in a selective manner. However, as we have just seen, a respondent's occupational choice account can show signs of variablity which simply does not fit the 'honest soul' view of persons. Account therefore needs to be taken of such variability. To do so requires a totally different conception of persons based on the interactive function of discourse.

The writings of Mead (1934), Vygotsky (1962), and more recently Harré (1983) can be drawn upon to provide a metatheoretical base for research into the articulation of occupational choice. These writers have pointed to the 'divided' and 'discursive' nature of the self. People are viewed as learning through the course of their development culturally-appropriate ways of self-expression so that meaningful interaction can occur. These conventional forms of discourse also extend to self-reference so that people artificially maintain a self through certain discursive practices. Thus as Harré (1983, p.66) has pointed out "the psychological unity of the self as a secondary structure" can be maintained through discourse. People can therefore refer to themselves in particular ways, for example, as personality types. Theorists also employ these discursive forms to construct theories

of occupational choice, as in the case of Holland's personality typology.

Therefore the present study takes a fundamentally different view of persons. It is not based on the assumption that respondents' accounts will be able to reveal the 'real' reasons for their choices but rather focuses on the articulation of these choices in a particular social context, that of the research interview.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LAY ACCOUNTS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was noted that variability in the ways in which people account for their choice of occupations has traditionally been ignored. It was also noted that theories derived from the two main psychological traditions stress the notion of individual volition in the choice of occupation rather than interpersonal, socio-economic or socio-cultural factors.

The present study focuses upon these two problems through an analysis of the language used in accounting for occupational choice. Instead of denying the possible significance of variability in such accounts, this feature can be systematically analyzed. This focus on language can also be extended to look at the common sense understandings people draw upon in evaluating and rationalizing their employment opportunities. Attention is therefore being switched from using responses as evidence of psychological structures and processes, to the linguistic achievements constituted by the articulation of occupational choices.

This theoretical perspective, known as discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), puts people's linguistic constructions at the heart of its programme of study and pays close attention to variability in accounts. Although this perspective involves insights that have been drawn from speech act theory and semiotics (see Potter and Wetherell, 1987), the present

investigation has been largely informed by what may be regarded as its most significant influence, namely, the sociological perspective of ethnomethodology, and in particular the research tradition it has spawned known as conversation analysis.

It is therefore useful to explore the ways in which ethnomethodological and conversation analytic insights into the nature of language use have had a major impact on discourse analysis in general, as well as upon the present study.

3.2 Language as action: an ethnomethodological perspective

Garfinkel's (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology* incorporates a radically different view of language use than that which is generally prevalent in social scientific research. A central claim of ethnomethodology, and of discourse analysis, is that language and action are inextricably bound up with one another. Not only is language used to make sense of and describe the world, but also to perform a host of actions in it. To explain this Garfinkel has drawn attention to two features of ordinary language use: indexicality and reflexivity.

3.2.1 Indexicality

The term 'indexicality' refers to those expressions which cannot be made sense of without reference to the context in which they were spoken. Their sense is 'indexed' to a particular context. Consider the utterance "I really don't know, maybe eight or nine". Without reference to the context in which this sentence was

uttered, that is, who is speaking to whom and about what, it is impossible to make sense of. Expressions of this kind have traditionally been viewed as something of a problem in conducting social scientific research and are thought of as being different to other descriptive terms (Heritage, 1984; Sharrock and Anderson, 1986). Non-indexical expressions are regarded as being 'propositional' in nature requiring no knowledge of context.

However, ethnomethodologists do not accept this division between indexical and propositional expressions. To understand why, let us consider the example mentioned above. It is part of the transcript extract used in the previous chapter. Therefore, the context is one of a researcher asking a nursing student her reasons for wanting to become a nurse.

> Int: How far can you trace it back?
>
> Resp: I really don't know maybe eight or nine. I think I can remember being in hospital when I was about that age. I just remember these people flashing about in white uniforms and they were always very very nice. I thought I want to be like that as well, I want to be nice.

Notice that the apparently straightforward descriptor "nice" is not so simple to make sense of. It could mean, for example, that nurses have an intrinsic aspect to their character which is pleasant, or that they are tactful in their dealings with patients, or that they look well, or possibly a combination of these. The point is that to make sense of such an utterance the hearer must actively interpret what is said. This can be accomplished by further interaction in order to accomplish the importance and meaning of "nice" in this particular context.

Int: So that's what drew you into nursing, you wanted to be nice?

Resp: Well, you see them as, you know, they do look nice and they have - they look nice and they talk nicely.

The term "nice" has been clarified here by referring to the way nurses look and their interactive style. Both speaker and hearer are engaged in creating this understanding. Moreover, this interaction is based on the tacit assumption that this sort of interpretative work is required. Yet even when the sense of the word "nice" has been further clarified, the hearer still has further interpretative work to do.

Int: And you want to be like that?

Resp: Yes, I want to be like that.

At this point the hearer (reader or researcher) may bring into play an understanding of human motivation to construe such an answer as reinforcing the impression the student has made of having a 'need' to be appreciated which she thinks is attainable through being a nurse. Overall then, the student has constructed a set of answers which hopefully 'bring off' this impression. In this sense, her answers constitute an action and the understanding arrived at achieved through interaction. A completely different set of responses may have been given if the student were, say, in a course selection interview where different communications might be intended. Thus, a speaker and hearer must be attuned to these subtle indexical features of everday conversation. As Heritage (1984, p.151) has noted a speaker is faced with three choices: "to describe or not, what to describe and how to describe it". The hearer, on the other hand, must attend to these features in order

to interpret what is said. The tasks involved for a hearer are therefore to ask "Why is the speaker referring to that object, in that way, and right now?" (p.151).

In conclusion Garfinkel makes the point that all utterances are indexical in the sense that their meanings are accomplished through interaction in particular contexts. Thus the utterances "I don't know, maybe eight or nine" and "I want to be nice" are not radically different for they are both indexical to some degree in that a contextual knowledge is required to understand both.

3.2.2 The documentary method and reflexivity in accounts

In order to explain how people make sense and account for their social world Garfinkel refers to the 'documentary method'. Having noted that people are attuned to the contextual factors of utterances Garfinkel goes on to argue that certain features of these contexts are attended to and interpreted as providing evidence of underlying patterns of mutual meaning-making. These features are in turn interpreted in terms of a knowledge of underlying patterns. Seen in these terms an account of a state of affairs both describes and creates that state of affairs and as such can be said to be reflexive. In other words, our perception of the meaning-making purpose of any interaction shapes our contribution to it, which in turn shapes the meaning-making going on.

The transcript extract taken from the interview between the researcher and student nurse can also be used to examine the

documentary method and its reflexive nature. In this interview the student was under the impression that the exchanges which took place between the researcher and herself were directed at 'getting at' reasons for her choice of occupation. The questions that were asked were taken as evidence of this underlying pattern and so the answers she gave were fashioned to fit into the perceived pattern. Consider the following exchanges once again.

(a)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Well, last year I worked as a technician and from then on I was drawn more from the technical side of things towards the patient kind of thing. I wanted to know what was going to happen to a patient rather than just testing this and testing that, I wanted to know the results of these tests and what we could do for it.

(b)

Int: How far can you trace it back?

Resp: I really don't know, maybe eight or nine. I think I can remember being in hospital when I was about that age. I just remember these people flashing about in white uniforms and they always were very very nice. I thought I wanted to be like that as well, I want to be nice.

In extract (a) the student is asked a direct question concerning her choice of occupation. Her response is to give an answer which is couched in such a way as to fulfil the requirements of the perceived underlying pattern to the proceedings, that is, the unearthing of rational reasons for her a choice. In extract (b), although not asked to give any reasons for her choice, the student answers the question in such a way as to 'fit in' reasons.

Garfinkel takes the notion of the documentary method a stage further by arguing that both lay and traditional social scientific methods of accounting rely upon this form of sense-making. If, for

example, the above extracts were interpreted by means of the documentary method, such an account would also be regarded by the researcher as providing rational reasons for the student's choice of occupation. However, for ethnomethodologists the documentary method is viewed only as an initial stage in explicating the rules which people orientate to in rendering their social world 'account-able'. The next stage is to show how these rules can be applied to a variety of contexts. For example, Wieder (1974) has shown how ex-convicts at a half-way hostel orientate towards a certain set of rules which he called 'the code' and which were used accomplish certain ends such as non-participation in activities involving hostel staff.

Garfinkel has also proposed that all rules embody an 'etcetera clause' which operates in such a way that the underlying patterns or rules that people orientate to can be adapted to new circumstances for a variety of purposes. One can therefore envisage that the kind of answers given by the student nurse in operating under a rule of rationality, would also serve the purpose of persuading those who select applicants for such courses that her choice was well-thought-out.

3.2.3 Reference to rules

It is important at this point to be clear about Garfinkel's position concerning the status of rules in interaction. Unlike Cicourel (1974), for example, Garfinkel does not view these rules as being a set of 'cognitive instructions' that govern interaction. He has no truck with such mentalistic concerns but rather has

argued that his brand of ethnomethodolgy is concerned with how people in their ordinary dealings with one another display their common sense knowledge of the rules of interaction so that meaning-making can proceed. Thus for Garfinkel the appearance of order in the social world is actively maintained as a product of interaction. The methods used in the accomplishment of this order are, in general, conversational practices. As Garfinkel and Sacks (1970, p. 342) have put it:

> Persons, because of the fact that they are heard to be speaking a natural language, *somehow* are heard to be engaged in the objective production and display of commonsense knowledge of everyday activities as observable and reportable phenomena. We ask what is it about natural language that permits speakers and auditors to hear, and in other ways witness, the objective production and objective display of commonsense knowledge, and of practical circumstances, practical actions, and practical sociological reasoning as well...For speakers and auditors somehow exhibit these phenomena in the particulars of speaking.

For Garfinkel then, it is not a system of rules "under the skull" which governs interaction but rather the display and detection of reference to rules. People engaging in conversation are able to construct and construe what is said through referring to rules and hence maintain a social world that is, in Garfinkel's terms, 'sense-able' and 'account-able'.

Okeefe (1979) has argued that this stance is flawed in that Garfinkel believes that the orderliness of the social world can be found in overt behaviour alone. He has noted, for example, that Garfinkel does not explain rational decision-making with reference to mental processes but instead refers to features of overt behaviour. Okeefe regards this as a confusion between two questions: "How do we tell?" and "What theoretical account are we

to give?". Thus he argues that we can tell if persons are acting in rational and orderly ways by examining their behaviour, for example, what they say and how they say it. However, it is also possible to go beyond this position and attempt to give an account for that behaviour such as an information-processing account. This study does not attempt to provide an intrapsychic account of occupational choice behaviour because of the kinds of empirical problems discussed in the previous chapter. Rather, it focuses on the social accomplishments achieved through the articulation of these choices.

3.3 Structure in interaction: conversation analysis

Conversation analysis has developed into a prominent form of ethnomethodological research in recent years, particularly in Britain (e.g., Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Atkinson, 1984). Initial work in this area focused on the organization of talk in naturally occurring conversation (e.g., Sacks, 1972; Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Schegloff, 1968). More recent studies have examined talk in more formal settings and have tackled substantive issues rather than a formal analysis of practical reasoning (e.g., Atkinson and Drew's, 1979 research on the management of accusations and defences in courtroom interactions). This research has shed light on what the talk is about, its subject matter, rather than just a description of its organizational properties (cf. Hester, 1985).

3.3.1 Ethnomethodology and conversation analysis

Heritage (1984) has drawn attention to the theoretical links which bind ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. First he notes that conversation analysis shares with ethnomethodology the study of competencies which ordinary members of society use in their day-to-day affairs. As its name indicates the competencies upon which it focuses are those used during the course of ordinary conversation, both to produce utterances and make sense of what others say. In this respect Heritage notes that Garfinkel's assumption of 'symmetry' is also fundamental to conversation analysis in that it is assumed that both speaker and hearer share the same methods for the production and interpretation of utterances.

The second point that Heritage makes is that Garfinkel's remarks on the indexical and reflexive nature of talk are taken up in conversation analysis. Conversation is said to be 'context-shaped' in that what is said by a speaker is a product of the context and in particular, what has been said previously. Speakers therefore construct their utterances in accordance with what has gone before and hearers also interpret these in relation to contextual factors. Conversation also has a 'context-renewing' character, arising out of the way in which it is context-shaped. Each utterance forms the context for what will come next and consequently how the next utterance will be interpreted. Conversation therefore has a 'self-organizing' quality (Sharrock and Anderson, 1986).

The third link with ethnomethodology is the way in which conversation analysts draw their conclusions only from the data they have available. Sacks saw little point in approaching the study of conversation through theorizing about it before doing the actual analysis. His approach was to closely examine the phenomenon itself without attempting to fit it to prior theoretical suppositions. Conversation analysis has its own distinctive methodology which involves the tape-recording and subsequent detailed transcription of conversational exchanges which are presented alongside the analysis of this material. This approach differs markedly from what is know as ethnomethodological ethnography which relies upon the researcher making observations of interactions and recording them by way of field notes. The analysis of these observations and subsequent presentation of the findings rely therefore on a 'second-hand' account of what was observed, involving an intermediate layer of interpretation.

The argument in favour of conversation analysis over ethnomethodological ethnography has been put by Akinson and Drew (1979). Their argument is based on what they regard as the strength of conversation analysis in tackling two fundamental methodological considerations involved in ethnomethodological research. These are: (1) to treat what appears on the face of it as mundane and commonplace as 'anthropologically strange' and as the product of members' methods of practical reasoning, and (2) to treat social actors as rule-using analysts and therefore to explicate the rules which they orientate to rather than imposing observers' constructions on them. Atkinson and Drew argue that

conversation analysis is better able to meet these requirements than ethnomethodogical ethnography as exemplified in, for example, Wieder's (1974) study. Analysis of verbatim transcripts also forms the basis of the discourse analytic approach adopted in this study.

3.4 Ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and discourse analysis

3.4.1 Suspending the realistic view of language

One of the hallmarks of ethnomethodological enquiry is its refusal to treat lay accounts as an explanatory resource. A major part of this perspective is the view that language is form of action. As Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.32) note, ethnomethodology (as well as speech act theory) bring to the fore the notion that "people use their language to do things". It may be used to achieve a variety of purposes ranging from asking to accusing. This perspective is central to discourse analysis which focuses upon the functions served by utterances.

Revealing the functional aspect of language requires the analyst to 'read' the context in which it appears. The reading of a context will be dependent upon the analyst bringing to bear his or her common sense understandings of language use. This reliance upon the use of common sense understandings is stressed in ethnomethodology which takes the view that the analyst and 'lay' person both access the same cultural resources in making sense of others' actions. Put in Garfinkel's (1967) terms the analyst will be initially involved in 'repairing indexicality' in order to make sense of what was said in a particular context.

Language creates the context for our reading of future utterances and enables us to perform numerous meaning-making functions. Thus we perpetually construct and reconstruct meaningful versions of reality through talk. Potter and Wetherell (1987, pp.33-34) provide three reasons for the use of the term 'construction': (1) the building blocks used in the construction of accounts of events are seen as being 'bits' of prefabricated linguistic resources, (2) a selection of these 'bits' is made in constructing accounts, and (3) the products of particular constructions are used as the basis for action in the social world. There are parallels here with Garfinkel's (1967) identification of an etcetera clause in the rules which people orientate to in interaction. As was noted earlier these rules are not tied to specific circumstances but can be brought to bear upon a variety of social contexts.

Ethnomethodologists and discourse analysts therefore do not use what respondents say as a resource for producing definitive descriptions and explanations. They are explicitly not attempting to

> recover events, beliefs and cognitive processes from participants' discourse, or to treat language as an indicator or signpost to some other state of affairs but looking at the analytically prior question of how discourse or accounts of these things are manufactured... (Potter and Wetherell, 1987,p. 35)

3.4.2 Theoretical and methodological perspectives

Discourse analysis shares with conversation analysis its methodological preference for the use of verbatim transcripts of

interactions. It also is concerned with 'subtantive' issues as exemplified by the work of Atkinson and Drew (1979) rather than simply with a 'formal' analysis of the relationships between utterances. In other words, it does not adopt ethnomethodology's indifference to the study of what the discourse is about. Thus it focuses upon what is achieved by discourse in relation to its subject matter.

However, unlike conversation analysis it is not limited to conversation but also examines the construction of various records and documents such as texts or newspaper articles. Therefore discourse analysts use the term discourse in its widest sense and concern themselves with the study of all social texts (e.g. Potter, Stringer and Wetherell, 1984).

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of discourse analysis is its focus on variation in accounts. For Potter and wetherell (1987, p.33) "the principal tenet of discourse analysis is that function involves the construction of versions, and is demonstrated by language variation".

Discourse analysts are therefore keen to discover how people vary their discourse across a range of different contexts and the functions that these different constructions serve. However, variation in discourse can also occur within a particular context as a person attempts to achieve certain interactional and self-presentational goals, and may even occur even within the same sequence of talk. For example, Wetherell et al. (1987) found in a study of male and female final year university students that both

groups accessed two different kinds of talk concerning women's employment opportunities. One type of talk was orientated towards expressing equality of opportunity for men and women, thereby accomplishing a certain kind of self-presentation as a fair-minded individual. The other kind of talk focused upon the practical constraints faced by women in obtaining and maintaining employment such as raising a family which was presented as a 'natural' practice for women. This served to undermine the equality of opportunity talk so that, males in particular, could be seen as presenting the 'hard facts' of the matter whilst still maintaining a positive self-presentation.

3.4.3 Reflexivity, relativism and reification

As already mentioned discourse analysis shares with conversation analysis its methodological preference for using verbatim transcripts rather than field notes as used in ethnomethodogical ethnography. Potter and Wetherell (1987) point out that ethnographic reports present their analyses with reference to researchers' descriptions of the data, making it difficult for readers to evaluate the analytic claims that are made. In contrast both conversation and discourse analysts present verbatim transcripts of participants' talk alongside the analytic claims that are made. Therefore readers of this type of report are able to examine the data and may concur with, or dispute these analyses.

This kind of research raises the issue, or difficulty, that such analytic claims are reflexively related to the data. As Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.182) put it, "accounts of how

people's language use is constructed are themselves constructions". Conversation and discourse analysts do not claim that they are providing definitive analayses of their data but recognize that they are engaged in the production of versions. This stance brings us face to face with the issue of relativism for implicit in this line of thinking is the view that there is no single correct interpretation of the data.

Hester (1981) has pointed out that conversation analysts retreat from this relativistic position in attempting to comply with the ethnomethodological constraint of treating interaction as being rule-governed (e.g., the work of Atkinson and Drew, 1979). Thus the methods employed in making sense of utterances (e.g., the organization of conversation around turn-taking systems) are descriptions of the systematics of conversation. In taking this stance Hester (1981, p.115) argues that

> the conversation analyst can only make statements about a 'real world out there' by reifying the products of his own practical reasoning and by assuming that its properties are independent of his description of them.

The result of this move is to create a 'tension' between reifying the products of analysis as descriptions of conversational competencies and the acceptance of the relative nature of the analytic conclusions reached. Hester argues the outcome of this apparent contradiction in conversation analytic work points to its similarity with conventional sociological work. If 'findings' are the product of empirical enquiry then reification can be viewed as a necessary part of the research process.

The present study is also open to this criticism of reification. However, this has been accepted in the interests of creating a useful account of the processes of what we take to be occupational and course choices. All of this is undertaken with an awareness of the possibility of generating alternative analyses of respondents' talk.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1 Introduction

The theoretical perspectives discussed in the previous chapter imply a particular methodological approach to the empirical study of occupational/course choice accounts. This chapter focuses on three main issues bearing upon the methodology of the study. The first is Garfinkel's view of decision-making as a retrospective product of accounting for a course of action. The second is the focus on turn-taking in conversation analysis which allows for the production of such accounts in interview settings to be viewed as resulting from a series of question-and-answer sequences. The third is the emphasis placed by discourse analysts on variability in accounts as a result of the deployment of specific linguistic devices in order accomplish particular conversational ends. These perspectives have led to the construction of a series of research questions which are discussed in the final section.

4.2 The methodology

4.2.1 Retrospective accounting

Garfinkel's (1967) variant of ethnomethodology concerns the way in which the social world is made to appear orderly as a result overt behaviour. The main activity which is seen as creating and sustaining this sense of order is conversation through which events and actions become 'account-able'.

This viewpoint structured Garfinkel's (1967) analysis of jurors' decision-making. He argued that the conditions which define a correct decision are not understood until after the decision had been made. It was only upon looking back over their deliberations that jurors were able to decide how they had reached a particular verdict. Thus jurors' descriptions of their deliberations stressed the integration of evidence which led to a particular verdict whilst evidence of jury anomie was avoided. The order imposed upon such deliberations imbued their decisions with 'officialness' so rendering them 'correct'.

Garfinkel takes the view that this kind of retrospective accounting for decisions is a common feature of daily life. He suggests that decision-making may have little to do with electing a course of action on the basis of available information but rather may be the product of people's ability to define the basis for decisions once made. This type of accounting can therefore be viewed as justifying a course of action and involves "assigning outcomes their legitimate history" (1967, p.114). He therefore poses the counterintuitive notion that "the outcome comes before the decision" (p.114). This perspective stands in stark contradiction to the more rational information-processing view of action generation and its explanation (e.g., Miller et al., 1960).

The present study has adopted this retrospective view decision-making and two important methodological implications have followed from taking this line. First, attention was required to be directed at individuals who had already made their choice of occupations rather than those who had yet to decide. This

obvioulsy differs markedly from studies which are concerned with attempts to define psychological factors which underpin people's choices and so predict eventual employment on the basis of their stated intentions and preferences. Second, those involved in the study had to be given an adequate opportunity to account for their choices. Clearly this ruled out the use of questionnaires or similar data-collection techniques which do not allow the gathering of extended responses, and which impose researchers' categorizations on the data. Indeed the ethnomethodological basis of the investigation place it within a different 'paradigm' to such 'cognition' studies (Khun, 1962).

4.2.2 Accounting in interviews

The retrospective accounts of occupational choice studied were generated primarily through research interviewing, although a small number of selection interviews were also examined. These accounts were not viewed as reporting on how respondents actually arrived at a choice of occupation but rather as the product of their linguistic resources. Thus references made to personality traits, socialisation histories, and economic and intrinsic motivation were examined. The analysis is therefore concerned with respondents' attempts to produce coherent and credible accounts.

This kind of perspective on interviews differs markedly from lay and traditional social scientific assumptions about the use of respondents' accounts in interviews. Silverman (1973) has drawn attention to the way in which interviewers and interviewees rely upon the documentary method of interpretation in making sense of

interview talk. Such talk is never treated as talk in itself but is taken as revealing certain underlying patterns. As Silverman says

> Questions and answers are heard in the context of a language-game as questions-asked-to-elicit-under-lying patterns and as answers-displaying-under-lying patterns, where the knowing of such patterns is understood to settle practical outcomes. (Silverman, 1973, p.39)

The ways in which respondents attempt to understand what the interviewer is 'looking for' can be approached from a conversation analytic viewpoint. From this perspective the interview can be thought of as a series of question-and-answer sequences. These exchanges are usually under the control of the interviewer who can use respondents' answers to generate further questions. Thus the end of a respondent's answer can be anticipated so as to intercept what is being said in order to take up a point of interest. Thus a question-answer, question-answer sequence operates, which Sacks (1972) has called a 'chaining rule', producing an orderly sequence of talk recognizable as an interview.

Because interviewers rarely give respondents advance notification of questions about to be asked through, for example, prefacing statements, respondents must gauge the direction and import of questions in the course of hearing them. Hughes (1982) has drawn attention to the ways in which patients in medical consultations can get an indication of a doctor's interpretative scheme through the latter's use of clarificatory exchanges. Doctors may use their turn during a consultation to produce formulations of gists or upshots (Heritage and Watson, 1979) of a patients previous answers. They may also break up a general question into a series of

specific questions if the initial answer was not heard as being complete. This then serves to instruct the patient as to the kind of information required.

Hughes points out that these kinds of exchanges represent a form of other-initiated repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977). Here the term repair refers to invitations to add to, amend or alter what a speaker has said in a previous utterance. Other-intiated repair, as opposed to self-correction, occurs when a hearer brings to the attention of the previous speaker a misunderstanding or point that requires amplification. The speaker's next turn can then be used to repair the source of trouble and so maintain mutual understanding. These types of exchanges are common in research interviews where attempts are made by the researcher to get respondents to talk in a way that brings out a topic of interest.

Co-participants may also be attuned descriptions of persons from certain groups. It is here that use can be made of Sack's (1972,1974) work on membership catergories. Sacks noted that persons may be described according to certain membership categories, for example by occupation. These categories can be drawn from certain conventional collections which Sacks called membership categorization devices. An important feature of membership categories is that they can be used as a means of ascribing to persons activities or characteristics they are conventionally associated with. When a certain category is used by a speaker, the hearer is able to make use of a stock of conventional knowledge about the category and make certain

inferences. In interviews concerning occupational choice these stocks of knowledge can be accessed in order to to guide interviewers in the kind of questions to be asked, and interviewees in the kind answers that are expected. For example, if an interviewer asks about the qualities thought to be required for a particular occupation, the respondent may draw upon certain characteristics that are favourably associated with that occupation.

Therefore respondents have open to them a number of ways of detecting the 'hidden agenda' of an interview and can frame their answers accordingly. An analysis of question-and-answer sequences in interviews allows the researcher to see the way in which the language-game is played back and forth until a point is reached where the interviewer regards a particular question topic as having been answered to his or her satisfaction. This can be achieved by noting when a new question topic is initiated.

4.2.3 Respondents' interpretative practices in interview[3]

Traditional research interviews are designed and analyzed to obtain consistency in respondents' answers. The assumption is made that consistent responses reflect some phenomenon of interest beyond these responses, for example, stable sets of beliefs or intentions. However, if one adopts a discourse analytic approach variability in respondents' accounts is viewed as being just as important as consistency. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that consistent responses may be the result of a respondent drawing upon a somewhat truncated range of interpretative practices. They argue therefore

that respondents should be made to 'work' by constructing interviews which put their accounting practices to the test. This can be accomplished through questions which require different stocks of conventional knowledge to be accessed and through invitations to repair.

Through an analysis of these accounting practices it is possible to trace links between particular linguistic constructions and the conversational functions they accomplish.[4] The researcher can then attempt show how respondents' assess what lies 'behind' questions and how they are able to meet these demands. Thus as Potter and Wetherell point out the questions themselves set some of the interpretative context for respondents' answers.

In an earlier paper Potter and Mulkay (1985) suggest that the formality of traditional interviews which make them seem like 'speaking questionnaires' should be dropped. Therefore in discourse analytic research the interviewer attempts to challenge respondents' interpretative practices. One way this can be achieved is to ask follow-up questions that focus on some problematic interpretation of a previous response thereby inviting the respondent to amend or add to a previous answer (i.e., to engage in repair procedures). Thus unlike traditional research interviews where the researcher may attempt to clear up misunderstandings in order to obtain consistency across responses, this type of interview deliberately forces respondents into a situation of repair.

4.3 An interactive perspective on interviewing

This study does not view interviews as providing indexes of cognitions but rather as records of interactive exchanges between researcher and respondent. Both are engaged in the production of a recognisable interview through the creation of meaningful exchanges and it is precisely how these meanings are produced within the context of such a language-game that is the focus of the study.

Therefore the researcher's questions are included in the analysis of respondents' answers for they provide the interpretative basis for the production of these answers. An examination of interview question-and-answer sequences is essential in order to explicate respondents' assessments of what lies behind questions and so help to explain the conversational functions of their answers. Discourse anlaysts take the view that these different functions manifest themselves in terms of response variability.

The analysis therefore concerns the ways in which respondents' accounts of their occupational choices exhibit different forms of construction. Consider once again transcript extract (a) from the chapter 2. The complete extract is presented below and has been split into two parts.

> Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?
>
> Resp: (1) For as long as I could remember I've always said I'm going to be a nurse. (2) Well, last year I worked as a technician and from then I was drawn more from the technical side of things towards the patient kind of thing. I wanted to know what was going to happen to a patient rather than just testing this and testing that, I wanted to know the results of these tests and what we could do for it.

In the first part of this answer (1) the student claims that nursing was an occupation she "always" had in mind. Yet in the second part of her response (2) she refers to being "drawn" into nursing prior to entering the course, and as has already been noted, this response appears to show evidence of realistic stage of thinking. If this sort of variability is added to what follows in extract (b) (Chp.2, pp.34-35), that is, a response which appears to conform to Ginzberg's fantasy stage, we can seen that these accounts are highly complex in their construction.

This combination of of different constructions may look confusing if viewed for example, from the developmental perspective but may make perfect sense to both the interviewer and interviewee in that such constructions accomplish a specific purposes within the interview which may change form moment to moment in the conversational ebb and flow. In the example above the respondent may be attempting to present an account of her choice which shows that she has made a rational, considered decision. However, she also appears to be trying to come across as being suitable for nursing by claiming to having had a long-standing interest in it.

4.4 Research questions

The study was guided by a series of research questions which are discussed below:

(1) To what extent do vocational students' accounts of their occupational/course choices correspond with Holland's predicted personality types?

If, as Holland proposes, there are distinct personality types which are drawn to different occupations then such 'personality-expressive' talk should be evident in respondents' accounts. Data pertinent to this question is examined in chapter 6.

(2) To what extent do vocational students' accounts of their occupational/course choices correspond with Ginzberg's realistic stage of development?

Ginzberg's theory would lead us to expect that college students, given that they are in late adolescence and beyond, should display realistic vocational thinking in their accounts. Data pertinent to this issue is examined in chapter 6.

(3) Do 'personality-expressive' accounts serve identifiable conversational functions?

Viewing students as retrospectively accounting for their occuaptional/course choices, and adopting a discourse analytic approach focusing on the functional nature of accounting practices leads to an exploration of identifiable conversational functions which 'personality-expressive' responses may serve. An analysis of data pertinent to this question is examined in chapter 7.

(4) Do 'realistic stage' accounts serve identifiable conversational functions?

An examination of the data with respect identifiable functions which 'realistic stage' responses may serve also follows from the adoption of a discourse analytic perspective. An analysis of data pertinent to this question is presented in chapter 8.

(5) What other kinds of accounting practices are drawn upon to make sense of occupational/course choices?

Of particular interest here were references made to family influences which were mentioned in pilot interviews. Data relevant to this kind of accounting practice is examined in chapter 7. Other types of accounting practice are also examined in chapters 7 and 8.

(6) Do vocational students make sense of their occupational/course choices in terms of gender considerations?

An aspect of occupational choice which has received relatively little attention from Holland or Ginzberg is the part played by gender expectations and indentifictions in people's choices. Respondents gender constructions are examined in chapter 9.

(7) To what extent do vocational students draw upon specialized occupational/course choice justifications? Do students who are at an advanced stage in their courses employ more specialized justifications?

The basis of this question was to explore the extent to which students make use of generally available justifications based on a conventional knowledge of occupational membership categories (Sacks, 1972, 1974) or an acquired specialist knowledge. Specialist justifications may be used by students who are at an advanced stage due to a developing knowledge of their chosen occupations through coursework and work placements. An analysis of data pertinent to this question appears in chapter 7.

(8) Do applicants in course selection interviews employ similar kinds of accounting practices as those observed in the 'research interviews'?

The analysis of course selection interviews was regarded as a useful means of checking upon the ecological validity of the 'research' interview findings. In this 'real life' context applicants are faced with the problem convincing interviewers that they have made suitable choices. Data pertinent to this question is examined in chapter 10.

CHAPTER 5

DATA COLLECTION AND TRANSCRIPTION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the research questions were investigated. The following are discussed: (1) the selection of vocational courses, (2) the sampling of students, (3) the interviewing procedures, and (4) the transcription of the interviews.

5.2. Course selection

In discussing the selection of vocational courses it is useful to distinguish between inter-occupational and intra-occupational choice (Taylor, 1979). The former refers to the choice of an occupational domain, for example, engineering. The latter refers to the choice of a specific job within that domain, an example with reference to engineering being aeronautical engineering.

Some of the vocational courses offered at Dundee Institute of Technology require only a broad inter-occupational choice to be made upon initial entry, as in the case of the BA in Business Studies. Others such as accountancy require entrants to have made a partial intra-occupational choice. This study concerns students following the latter type of course because, although not actually in employment, they have made a commitment to an occupation, or at least a more or less coherent and particular grouping of occupations.

Two courses were selected: the BSc honours sandwich courses in Mechanical Engineering and Nursing. Mechanical engineering students, by the very nature of their course choice, specialize in a major (albeit general) branch of engineering and upon completion can apply to join and work towards chartered membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Nursing students, on the other hand, specialize in their final year by choosing which part of the Register of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting they wish to work towards, for example mental nursing.

These particular courses were selected primarily with regard to research question 6 on gender and occupational choice accounts. The two courses tend to attract students of opposite sex thereby providing the opportunity to examine gender as a feature of students' accounting practices. Also taken into account was the fact that (lay) stereotypes of mechanical engineers and nurses are very different thereby allowing for the contrast of different intersubjective linguistic resources (research question 7).

5.3 The sampling of students

The sampling considerations in this study can be contrasted with those involved in the studies discussed in chapter 1. The aim of these kinds of study is to uncover and generalise about psychological structures or processes underlying occupational choice. Such generalisations require that a sample must be seen to be representative of a particular population so that findings can be applied to that population. If a sample is not seen as being

representative findings become questionable, as in the case of the study by Ginzberg et al. (1951) which has been criticized for relying on high a socio-economic status, white, male sample (e.g., Roberts, 1975). In addition the sample must also be sufficiently large to rule out the effects of variability in the data. Variability is attributed to individual differences which may obscure general underlying patterns and therefore samples must be large enough to allow these patterns to show through what is taken to be superficial differences. Large samples are therefore regarded as necessary for the amplification of postulated psychological universals.

In contrast, the sample size and composition of this study was not influenced by either of the above considerations. By focusing on the range and function of respondents' linguistic practices rather than attempting to uncover underlying psychlogical universals, the issue of sample size becomes unimportant. The kind of variability or commonality being sought is located within respondents' linguistic competencies and not between them as an abstracted psychological phenomenon. Moreover, the identification and explanation of such variation forms the focus of this study. Thus it would have been possible to conduct the study with only one student from each course using a repeated interview format. Different questioning procedures could have been used to generate different accounting practices drawing upon distinct linguistic resources. In other words, it is a mapping out of accounting practices and the conversational functions they serve which is of concern and it these issues which are obscured by the kind of data collection and analysis techniques used in the studies discussed in

chapter 1.

Although a longitudinal study involving one student from each course would have been possible, the collection of data would have extended over the duration of the courses (over four years). This was impossible given the timescale of this research. Moreover, it was felt that the interviewing of a small number of students from each course would provide a richer data set resulting from individual differences in linguistic resources and accounting practices. The number of students that could be interviewed was also influenced by the fact that all the data had to be transcribed by the researcher, a time-consuming affair.

Research questions 1-6 required an analysis of the main (research interview) data set allowing for comparisons between the two vocational groups in terms of their 'personality-expressive' accounts (question 1) and gender constructions (question 6). Research questions 7 required the collection of data from first and final year students in order to examine the extent to which students at an advanced stage in their courses make use of specialist knowledge in order to justify their choices (particularly in the case of nursing students once thay have chosen which register they wish to aim for). Question 8, on the ecological validity of the findings, required the analysis of a small number of course selection interviews for comparison with the research interviews.

The sample consisted of twenty students from each course, ten from the first year and ten from the final year (i.e., a total of

forty). Two mechanical engineering and four nursing course selection interviews were also recorded.

5.4 Interviewing procedures

Students were visited during timetabled classes and invited to take part in tape-recorded interviews about their occupational and course choices. They were reassured that these interviews were for research purposes only, that their names would not appear on any computer file or in any report connected with the study, and that any identifying references made during the recording of the interviews would be omitted when transcribing the material. Arrangements were made for those who volunteered to be interviewed during non-class time in a private room. The first year students were interviewed within the first four weeks of their starting whilst the final year students were given the maximum possible experience of their courses and were interviewed in the final four weeks of the penulitimate term, the final term being reserved for examinations. In most cases thirty minutes was enough to cover the question topics.

The semi-structured interview format used was developed out of pilot work involving individual interviews with intermediate undergraduates from both courses as well as a group interview involving three students from each course. An interview schedule was developed from an analysis of these interviews (appendix 1). This offered the advantage of asking students a standard series of questions but also allowing for follow-up questions. Questions were designed so as to ask students about their motivations and how

they came to choose their particular courses. In addition to the standard questions asked of both year groups, final year students were asked about their training placement experience and the extent to which such work matched or differed from their initial expectations. Apart from being asked to account for their own choice of occupation respondents were also asked about the possible reasons involved in choosing the other course under study and to describe the work involved in that occupation. Thus mechanical engineering students were asked about the considerations inolved in choosing nursing and the work involved, and vice versa (see research question 7). Respondents were also asked about their views on minority sex members in these occupations.

Permission was sought from the departments concerned to tape-record a small number of course-selection interviews. Letters were also sent out to applicants asking for their permission, pointing out that this was in no way connected with their application and that the study was being carried out in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The mechanical engineering interviews involved one academic interviewer whilst the nursing interviews were conducted by a panel of three. The interviews were recorded by the interviewers themselves without the presence of the researcher.

5.5 Transcription of the interviews

Interviews were transcribed into a word processing system using a cassette recorder linked to headphones in order to minimize background noise when listening. A foot-operated switch was used

to start and stop the tape so as to facilitate typing pace.

The level of transcription was determined by the research questions. These questions are concerned with types of accounting practices used in justifying occupational choices and their content. The focus of the study is therefore on the semantic nature of these accounting practices and their functions, and not detailed linguistic features such as pause-lengths and intonation. The transcription of these features was therefore of no value to this study and indeed could interfere with the readability of the data (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). A complete transcript is presented in appendix 2 as an example of the level of transcription used in the study.

CHAPTER 6

LOOKING FOR PERSONALITY TYPES AND REALISTIC CHOICES

6.1 Introduction

If, as Holland proposes, personality directs occupational choice and, as Ginzberg theorizes, there are distinct stages in the development of occupational preference then interview responses should reflect these types and stages. In other words, Holland's personality types for mechanical engineering and nursing and the qualities which constitute Ginzberg's realistic stage of development (given respondents' ages) should emerge naturally from the data (see research questions 1 and 2). To test whether this was the case responses were examined for instances of Holland's personality types and Ginzberg's realistic stage of vocational thinking.

6.2 Emergent personality types?

According to the 'Occupations Finder' in Holland (1985) mechanical engineering comes under the category of 'realistic' occupations.[5] It is therefore said to attract people who primarily perceive themselves as having practical abilities and a preference for working with objects and machines rather than people. Realistic types are also said to be materialistic valuing money, power and status. The particular subtype for this occupation is specified as 'realistic, investigative, enterprising'. The investigative element being of secondary importance is associated with a preference for intellectual work and an interest in science. The enterprising element is what Holland refers to as the tertiary element of this particular personality profile, and is associated

with a preference for work where leadership or an ability to influence others is required, as in managerial or sales positions.

General nursing comes under the category of 'social' occupations. It is therefore said to attract people who primarily perceive themselves as having interpersonal skills and an aversion for systematic, ordered work involving objects or machines. The particular subtype for the occupation of general nurse is specified as 'social, investigative, artistic'. Investigative is the secondary element of this subtype, implying the preferences mentioned above whilst the artistic element refers to a preference for unstructured creative activities and an aversion for systematic work, as is found in 'conventional' occupations (e.g., a clerk).

As mentioned in the previous chapter nursing students taking the BSc at Dundee Institute of Technology select which register they wish to qualify for in the final year of their course. Two forms of occupational choice are therefore associated with this course: the initial selection of nursing at the pre-entry stage and a further intra-occupational choice, the choice of register, in the final year. Of the ten final year students interviewed, seven were were specializing in psychiatric nursing and three in general nursing.

An examination of the engineering students' interview transcripts revealed that eleven out of the twenty explicitly mentioned technical competencies or an interest in working with machines as the basis for their choice, whereas only one of the final year nursing students expressed a liking for working with machines in a medical context. Of the twenty nursing students

interviewed seventeen gave responses emphasizing an interest in working with people and helping them whilst none of the engineering students gave this kind of response. Two extracts are presented below to illustrate these contrasting kinds of response.

5ME9 (male, 23)[6]

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?[7]

Resp: Well, it just started off from being an interest when I was young, making models from Mechano kits and mechanical subjects at school, I quite enjoyed them. I enjoyed the physics, maths side of it. I wasn't certain I wanted to do mechanical; there's civil, electrical and chemical. I just had a look around and decided to come to the mechanical course.

1NRS7 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to go into the field of nursing?

Resp: I think it will be a well worth job, I'll get a lot of job satsifaction from it and everday is going to be different, it's not going to be boring. And getting to know more people and helping them, feeling that you're doing something at the end of the day, it's not just wasted really.

The mechanical engineering respondent (5ME9) traces his choice back to an interest in construction kits and "mechanical subjects at school". This appears to indicate a preference for 'realistic' activities. He then goes on to mention that he enjoyed physics and maths, that is, 'investigative' subjects. This response therefore appears to reveal the first two elements of the mechanical engineer subtype. In contrast the nursing respondent (1NRS7) expresses a preference for working with people and helping them, and for variety of work. This response appears to correspond to the 'social' and 'artistic' elements of the nurse subtype.

Differing kinds of response were also found concerning the importance of financial rewards in respondents' choice of

occupations. In some cases this topic was indirectly raised by respondents themselves but for the purposes of analysis only those who were explicitly asked are considered. Of the nine mechanical engineering respondents who were asked if they had considered pay important when making their choice, seven indicated they had whereas none of the nursing respondents mentioned salary as an important consideration in their initial choice of nursing. Indeed, of the ten nursing respondents who were asked if they had considered salary, six gave responses which played down this kind of reward in favour of 'job satisfaction'. Two extracts are presented below to demonstrate these different kinds of response.

1ME6 (male, 17)

Int: What about pay, did that come into it?

Resp: They're basically well paid, I've been informed of that. They're really well paid.

Int: And was that a major part of your thinking?

Resp: Yeah, that as well. I didn't want to go above myself but I wanted the best of what I could get.

1NRS7 (female, 17)

Int: Did you ever consider salary?

Resp: I don't think in nursing you can because it's not, well it's not really that good a salary. So I mean, I wouldn't go into a job I didn't like, I couldn't, even though you got really good wages. I wouldn't think it worth it if you weren't really happy what you were doing whereas if you came away thinking that you've done something worthwhile, you've got some satisfaction then it's going to be - [8] maybe the wages aren't so good but at least you're not going to be disatissfied with what you've done.

These differing kinds of response would appear to confirm that 'realistic types' value monetary rewards and that 'social types' rate more highly intangible rewards such as 'job satisfaction'. Taken together these differences in expressed financial motivation

and in the expression of interests and preferences leading to occupational choice appear to provide support for Holland's typology.

6.3 Conversational complexities: disappearing types

Although it was possible to select responses which seemed to offer support for Holland's personality types for these occupations, it became evident that this could only be achieved by ignoring the complex conversational context of such responses. When this was examined, mismatches between responses and the typology were revealed and categorization often became problematic. Indeed it can be said that the 'types' tended to disappear into the discursive fabric weaved by researcher and respondent.

Eleven of the engineering respondents explicity mentioned technical competencies and an interest in working with machines as the basis for their choice. However, the categorization of these statements became problematic when sequences of responses were considered. As the following respondent's answers show, variability of response can undermine attempts to apply Holland's apparently straightforward categorizations.

5ME10 (male, 25)

(1)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well it's a subject, engineering as a whole is a subject that I've been interested in since a child, building things, seeing how things work, taking things apart. And also there's the influence of my parents, my father's an architect and also my grandfather's an engineer, so there's a sort of family thing. So no matter how much you try to get away from it you are influenced by what your parents do. But generally from an early age I was interested in machines and it stemmed from there.

(2)

Int: How did you arrive at your particular decision to aim for this occupation?

Resp: Em, well funnily enough I did a year of architecture before starting here. I was always interested in building something, design, that sort of area, construction. So I tried architecture and discovered that midway through that year I wasn't interested in it. So I completed the year and came here.

In extract (1) the respondent links an interest in practical activities he engaged in as a child ("buildings things and "taking things apart") with an interest in machines. This appears to be a straightforward instance of a 'realistic' personality type. However in extract (2) the same interest is associated with design and his earlier choice of architecture. "Building things" and "construction" are now associated with an interest in buildings. Yet Holland classifies architecture under 'artistic' occupations; a type which is unrelated to engineering! Had a brief structured interview or questionnaire been used to explore respondents' views of their occuaptional choices this 'qualification' might not have emerged. However the conversational nature of the interview reveals a complex account of occupational choice which is not easily reduced to Holland's discrete categories. A more serious problem for Holland's theory is the appearance of responses which appear to contradict one another and so cannot be categorized. The following examples illustrate this kind of apparent contradiction.

5ME7 (male, 22)

(1)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: (inaud several secs[9]) I didn't fancy doing a desk job, well primarily a desk job like an accountant or a businessman, and I liked technical subjects at school so engineering seemed suitable.

(2)

Int: I'd like to move onto your placements. What sort of expectations did you have about them before they began?

Resp: The first placement I had was (inaud several secs) so when the first placement came along I took it or applied for it. That was basically maintenance engineering. It was good hands-on experience and I would call myself an apprentice fitter. The second placement, that was a bit more professional (inaud). That was a desk job doing the development of products and that was more my idea of what a professional engineer would do and that's the kind of thing I see myself doing.

In extract (1) the respondent provides an answer which might be interpreted as evidence of a dominant 'realistic' trait; a preference for technical subjects and an aversion for a "desk job". In extract (2), however, whilst his first placement is presented as being "good hands-on experience" he clearly expresses a preference for a "desk job" which appears to contradict what he had said some time earlier in extract (1). The following extracts illustrate a more subtle form of contradiction.

1ME7 (male, 18)

(1)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: My dad's a marine engineer and I've worked with him during the summer holidays and enjoyed it, and I'd also like to be sitting at a desk some of the time designing things.

Int: What sort of work were you doing?

Resp: Stripping engines and more heavy work.

Int: Well that's being a mechanic, surely you might be suited to being a mechanic. What's the difference between what a mechanic does and a mechanical engineer?

Resp: A mechanic does that all the time whereas I might be sitting down some of the time.

Int: And when you say sitting down what sort of work would you be doing?

Resp: Designing mainly, drawing designs.

(2)

Int: When you finish this course what area do you hope to go into?

Resp: Probably design.

(3)

Int: You mentioned design, what's appealing about design work?

Resp: You're using your mind to design.

These extracts trace a shift in the respondent's presentation of his occupational interests. In extract (1) he mentions that he enjoyed the manual work he did with his father but that he also had a lesser interest in "sitting down" doing design work. When questioned about the difference between a mechanic and a mechanical engineer he again makes the point that a mechanical engineer does manual work, like a mechanic, but that design work is also involved some of the time. These responses therefore appear to accord with Holland's realistic type. However in extracts (2) and (3) he expresses a preference for design work which involves using the "mind". These responses might therefore be interpreted as showing signs of a dominant 'investigative' or even 'artistic' trait if compared with the 'architecture' response given by respondent 5ME10 on pages 78-79.

Indeed many of the engineering respondents expressed interests and preferences which would appear to indicate that they are 'investigative types'. This is a reversal of what would be expected according to the personality pattern for mechanical engineering which is said to attract the dominant 'realistic personality'. Nine of the twenty expressed an interest in the physical sciences or maths as the basis for their choice of mechanical engineering, or

spoke of it in problem-solving terms. The following examples illustrate this kind of response.

1ME2 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Em, I don't know, I just always enjoyed science subjects at school. Physics was always my favourite and I wanted something to do with physics. I don't know, I thought about the electrical side of it but it was always more difficult and I liked finding out why things worked and why they did such and such a thing. I just wanted to know more about why things worked and why they did it.

1ME8 (male, 17)

Int: What is it that draws you to this area, you could say this is what I like doing, this is what mechanical engineering is about?

Resp: Finding out about things.

5ME5 (male, 21)

Int: What was it that drew you to engineering then, what was it you liked about engineering?

Resp: It's not so much that I like engineering, so much as I hated the arts subjects more if you understand what I mean. It wasn't a second choice, I do like it but I don't know why. The thought never occurred to me, I just like maths I suppose, I like the problem solving involved.

Another problematic aspect of respondents' accounts (from the point of view of Holland's predictions) was discovered when examining how they talked about the rewards considered in choosing engineering. Although seven of these respondents said they had considered financial reward an important aspect of their choice, six played down the importance of this aspect. The extract below is illustrative of this type of response.

1ME5 (male, 23)

Int: Is there a big pay difference between what you were doing in the drawing office and what you'll be doing when you come out?

Resp: Well yes and no because em, giving up five years, I've just been married a year and building a home, the next five years are going to be a big part of our lives. It was really something that when I had the opportunity I really wanted to do it and money wasn't number one on the list. If they said go and do the course and come back and we'll pay you what you're getting now, obviously I wouldn't have done it. But I wouldn't say that money was the most important thing, it was just something I wanted to do.

Holland also claims that realistic types value status. However, fourteen of the twenty engineering respondents spoke of a stereotypical view held by the public of mechanical engineers as car mechanics or people who wear boiler suits and work with spanners. This might suggest that they believed that mechanical engineering was generally regarded as a relatively low-status occupation which does not accord with the view of 'realistic' types as valuing status.

5ME5 (male, 21)

Int: Do you think there are any qualities you have to have to be an engineer?

Resp: ...I think you've to be slightly, what's the word, tolerant. You're not accepted much for what you actually are. For instance, if you were to say to somebody, I'm an engineer, especially a mechanical engineer more than a civil or electronic, they'd think you're either a car mechanic or somebody going about with a greasy hammer...

1ME6 (male, 17)

Int: What do you think most people think mechanical engineers do?

Resp: Probably, well I know a lot of my friends thought I was going to become a time-served mechanic. You're going to fix cars was what a lot of them said. I think that's what the majority of people think, I think they'd think you're an actual mechanic.

Turning to the nursing respondents we find that the combination of preferences for working with people at a personal level and variety of work expressed by respondent 1NRS7 on page 76 was articulated by

seven of first year entrants. In Holland's terms this is characteristic of the 'social' and 'artistic' elements of the nursing subtype. Two further examples of where these kind of statements were found together are presented below.

1NRS2 (female, 18)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Well, when I was in sixth year I helped at (name of centre[10]), which is a day centre for physically and mentally handicapped, once a week and I really enjoyed helping with it. So I really wanted to do something to help. Em, I really wanted to help them.

Int: So you say that you decided this is something interesting to do, I'll go along.

Resp: Yeah, well it was one thing that I really enjoyed doing and I really didn't fancy working in an office cause you'd be sitting there all the time being bored and you wouldn't have much variety in it. And also em, each day, it would be different if you worked in a hospital unlike the work in an office.

1NRS8 (female, 19)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: ...And I just liked being with people but I didn't want to be stuck in an office and didn't want to be stuck in a shop or anything cause I've worked in a shop and I know what it's like, it's alright doing it part-time but it's not for me to be able to enjoy it. And I just wanted to be a nurse cause I like people, that's the main reason.

These kind of responses present nursing as an occupation which involves relating to people and offering a sort of variety not found in 'shop' or 'office' work. However, this was not how general nursing was characterized by the final year students. All seven of the final year students who chose to do their mental nurse register characterized general nursing as routinized and less personal than their chosen specialism. Psychiatric nursing was presented as being more 'patient-centred' and less 'task-orientated' than general nursing. Of the three students who elected to do general nursing, two spoke of a preference for relating to patients and a dislike

for the routine manual tasks they have to perform, the other respondent spoke of wanting to take up psychiatric nursing but of being discouraged from doing so by her husband. Three examples of these negative characterizations of general nursing are presented below.

4NRS10 (female, 21, psychiatric nursing)

Int: So what would you need to be to be a psychiatric nurse?

Resp: To be a psychiatric nurse em, I think you have to have the ability to communicate with people, be able to communicate definitely. Em, the ability to em, distance yourself to some extent I think. You know, you have to help people without getting too involved with them, that's something that's difficult. Em, somebody who doesn't get too emotionally involved as well. Definitely somebody who's empathetic. I think genuiness cause you've got to have a real desire to help the person. I think a lot of nurses who go into general are not so interested in the person and they'd rather you weren't so interested in the person you're nursing. It's all techniques.

4NRS9 (female, 21, psychiatric nursing)

Int: What is it that puts you off that?

Resp: Just it seems so repetitive and once you know how to do it that's it. It's not really dealing with the person, it's all the things that are around him. In general they make such an issue of dressing, it just doesn't seem that important to me, it's the patient I want to speak to and find out what they're feeling and thinking, how they're reacting to the hospital. That's what I'm interested in, I think all the other things are side things I'm not interested in.

4NRS3 (female, 21, general nursing)

Resp: ...all your doing is everything that the person needs, from the most basic thing to maybe sitting and just listening to them talking. But you're not allowed to do that on the ward.

Int: Why wouldn't you be allowed to do that?

Resp: Some people don't like you sitting down, some sisters, staff nurses, hospitals in general, they just don't like you. Communication is the word that (inaud). They'd rather have you folding up incontinence pads or cleaning out some wee cupboard that they find. And sitting talking to somebody is just not getting on with it obviously...

Int: Which would you prefer, to be kept busy or to be allowed time to...

Resp: Well in that time you are being kept busy, you see it's just how you're being kept busy. I think if you're going to have to care for one person totally in your day and it's your responsibility to make sure that all their needs are fulfiled, then you need to spend time speaking to them, and cleaning things isn't accomplishing anything.

The first respondent presents psychiatric nursing as a branch of nursing which involves skill in interpersonal relations and commitment to patients ("the ability to communicate with people.... somebody who's empathetic... genuiness... a real desire to help the person"). Yet these qualities are also stressed by the entrant students in their intial selection of nursing at the general level. However, respondent 4NRS10 does not share the same view of general nursing claiming that "it's all techniques". Respondent 4NRS9 elaborates on this task-bound view of general nursing by claiming that it is "repetitive" and does not involve "dealing with the person" but rather "all the things that are around him". She is able to contrast this implicitly with psychiatric nursing which does not involve these "side things". The general nursing student, respondent 4NRS3 also expresses the view that nursing should involve communicating with patients. However, she conveys a sense of disillusionment through her claims that this view of nursing is not shared by practising senior nurses and that menial tasks are given a greater priority.

Thus while nursing students do express their occupational choice in 'social' and 'artistic' terms, the final year students, and in particular those who have chosen psychiatric nursing, present a view of general nursing as 'reptitive' and 'technique-dominated'. This contrasts with the optimistic view

presented by the pre-specialism first year students who see nursing, in general, as varied and social. Again, as with the engineering students, the extended conversational nature of the interview has allowed variable responses to emerge which would not have been apparent had a questionnaire or brief structured interview been used. In this case the varability is between the first and final year respondents in their characterization of general nursing.

Although six of the ten respondents asked about salary played down the importance of financial rewards in favour of 'job satisfaction', six of the final year students gave responses which attached a greater significance to pay. Two examples of this kind of response are given below.

4NRS5 (female, 21)

Int: And have you decided upon what is is you want?

Resp: ...I want to try Australia or something or other, if I was going to stay in nursing I would go out of Britain. I think maybe I'll be disillusioned then but I think they think much more highly of nurses, especially in America, much better pay, much better working conditions from what I've heard...

4NRS10 (female, 21)

Int: What about pay, did that come into you thinking before you started?

Resp: No, I think we all had this idea that (inaud) and I remember one of the very first lecturers and the chap was asking us why we'd all chosen our courses and everybody else said money and he didn't even ask us, he said well obviously that's not why the nurses did it (laughs) and I think that's when it began to hit us that the pay's rotten. But everybody has this idea that it was a vocational job and you weren't going to be bothered about pay because you'd be caring so much about your patients. It's the case now that the girls are becoming very, very bothered about pay, they're much more put down about it now at the end.

Responses of this kind communicate a sense of disillusionment which constitutes an underlying theme throughout the interview. Again this would be very difficult to detect and characterize using interest inventories or questionnaires which do not allow respondents the opportunity of using their responses to accomplish different persuasive and constructive acts.

6.4 Realistic choices?

Given the fact that respondents had selected specific vocational courses and that their ages (17 - 25 years) corresponded with the age of 'transition' and 'realistic' choices in Ginzberg's developmental theory, it would be expected that their responses should reveal signs of choice realism. The assessment of whether or not responses demonstrated choice realism was based on the presence of the following aspects stressed in Ginzberg's theory. It would be expected that respondents refer to the considered, planned nature of their choice along with a knowledge of their intended field of employment (i.e., evidence of 'exploration'). It would also be expected that references be made to interests, capacities or values (i.e., the 'crystallization' of a choice). Eighteen of the twenty entrant students and all of the final year students gave responses which showed some combination of the above criteria. The following examples illustrate this apparent choice realism.

1NRS1 (female, 18)

Int: I'll begin by asking you why do you want to enter nursing?

Resp: Well, when I was deciding what I was going to do I thought of all sorts of things, I don't want to sound big-headed but I could have chosen from most things you see. Em, I felt that I really wanted to work with people, I like working with people. I mean I work on a Saturday in a shop in (reference to a location) and I get on with folk, with the public and em, I just wanted to meet, I felt nursing would give me a chance to meet people and help them as well. Em, my mum is an auxilliary nurse, I suppose that influenced me a little bit. She was, she, my parents didn't say do this, do that or anything, I mean I was free to make my own decision. I feel it's an excellent career to get into and especially if you do the degree you're going to stand a better chance, if I wanted to go on and branch out and maybe do administration or lecturing then I would stand a better chance with the degree. And if I wanted to stop and have a family or whatever then it's always something I could go back to, just...(end of response)

5ME1 (male, 21)

(1)

Int: How did you arrive at your particular decision to aim for this occupation?

Resp: What as a mechanical engineer? Well, I think it was something at school that, you know, doing stuff like physics and maths although it isn't really mechanical engineering. I think it sort of gives you a taste for it. But I didn't want to do something like applicable maths or that because although it was, you know, I was okay at maths but it wasn't something that really excited me, I wanted something that, you know, you could work with your hand as well because I'd did, eh, woodwork "O" grade in my final year just as a fun subject, but it was great fun. I felt it was better than just sitting around all day. So I was looking for something that, you know, did sort of allow me to use my maths and physics and that, but also where I would be able to use my hands as well.

(2)

Int: Did you read up on any of the literature?

Resp: Oh yeah, I mean I read up on a lot of the booklets that the EITB put out, that's the Engineering Industry Training Board and em, also stuff my father had. And I mean I've known people that have gone onto the course before me, guys that are a couple of years older that have gone onto the course and that. So I did have a bit of feedback, you know, it wasn't just making up my own mind entirely.

The first extract exhibits several features which correspond to Ginzberg's realistic stage of development. The respondent implies that her choice was considered ("when I was deciding what to

do...I could have chosen from most things..."). Second, she mentions her interest in working people and helping them by way of reference to her experience of shop work and parental influence. Third, she displays a knowledge of her intended occupation by referring to perceived advantages in doing the degree course. The mechanical engineering student's account also displays features which could be taken as showing the operation of 'realistic stage' vocational thinking. In the first extract he refers to school subjects he was interested in and which are relevant to mechanical engineering ("doing stuff like physics and maths...it gives you a taste for it"). He also mentions his liking for working with his hands as the basis for his choice. In the second extract he appears to demonstrate the considered nature of his choice by referring to careers literature he had read and older students on the course that he had talked to.

Responses such as these appear to indicate the operation of realistic stage vocational thinking. However, as with Holland's personality types, a closer look at the data reveals the problematic nature of categorizing responses when the ongoing dialogue is considered.

In five of the interviews conducted with the twenty entrant students difficulty arose in coming to a judgement as to whether or not a respondent could be said to be at the realistic stage of development. Respondents gave answers indicating they had researched their choice only later to provide answers which appeared to show that they had little knowledge of their intended occupation. The following extracts from an interview with a mechanical engineering student illustrate this problem.

1ME1 (female, 17)

Int: Why can you trace it back so early as second year?

Resp: Yeah, my big brother introduced me to it. He was working in engineering in the RAF and I went down there for a couple of weeks and thought this sounds interesting so I wanted to do that.

Int: And how else did you find out about it?

Resp: Eh well, just through the school, sort of the careers library and things. I sort of looked up leaflets on the RAF and engineering and eh, what the universities did. Aeronautical engineering I wanted to do as well but just sort of any aspect of engineering.

Int: If I asked you to describe the typical work that a mechanical engineer does could you do that for me?

Resp: Not at the moment, no. I've only been here a couple of weeks and I've no experience of it at all. But eh, sort of mechanisms, sort of stripping things and putting them back together again, finding faults with whatever they are doing, machines and stuff.

Int: Okay, but when you say that it seems like you maybe don't know then what's involved in mechanical engineering.

Resp: No, I don't. That's sort of why I came as well, I wanted to find out.

At first this respondent refers to a process of finding out about mechanical engineering through contact with her brother and through searching the careers literature. However she then explicitly states that she cannot describe the work involved, although she does proceed to in a vague and hesitant manner. She then suggests that she came on the course to discover what kind of work is involved! The basis of her apparently well planned, informed choice crumbles as the conversation continues.

A further categorization problem emerged concerning the planned nature of students' choices. Fifteen of the respondents (eleven from nursing) gave two contrasting types of reason for their choices. On the one hand, they claimed that their choice had

been determined from an early age or that they had never considered any other career, and on the other hand they alluded to a decision-making process prior to course entry. The following extracts from an interview with a nursing student are illustrative of these apparently conflicting types of response.

1NRS3 (female, 18)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: For as long as I could remember I've said I'm going to be a nurse and that's it. Well last year I worked as a technician and from then on I was drawn more form the technical side of things toward the patient kind of thing...

Int: Did you consider any other careers?

Resp: They were all medically orientated, it was either that I stick my job out as a technician or go into physiotherapy or something.

Int: What drew you to the medical side of things?

Resp: Just at school I was better at the sciences than I was at the business studies kind of thing.

This respondent initially implies that her interest in nursing stretches far back into her past. However, in the same response she refers to working as a technician and of being drawn into nursing. She then refers to other medical careers she had considered through her interest in science. This apparent contradiction makes it impossible to decide whether her choice was considered or whether, as she claims, she had "always" wanted to take up nursing.

Further contradictions emerged when apparently 'realistic stage' responses were followed by 'fantasy stage' responses. This kind of switch in response was illustrated in the the "I want to be nice" (1NRS3) example in chapter 2. Seven respondents gave mixed responses of this kind which appeared to show signs of 'realism'

and 'fantasy'. The following extracts taken from an interview with a first year mechanical engineering illustrate this problem for the developmental view.

1ME6 (male, 17)

(1)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Because I think it strongly relates to the subject I'm best at, physics. I've always enjoyed this kind of work, maybe not exactly the same thing but working on cars, motorbikes and things. It's at a slightly higher level than that, that's all.

(2)

Int: Did you consider any other career at all?

Resp: I considered electrical engineering as well. I felt that so many people do that that there would be a huge flood of them, everyone seems to be going into that just now....

Int: You say there would be a whole flood of them, what significance would that have?

Resp: Well there would be less jobs at the end of the course, less available jobs. People intend to move away from mechanical engineering but they still need them in every industry virtually.

(3)

Int: you say you want to go into design, what is it that draws you to that area?

Resp: Just always, watching motor sport and that, you hear about all these designers who design all these grand prix cars and rally cars, It's realy been my ambition because I do watch that kind of stuff on TV and I'd like to be involved in that. I've watched it for many years and that's become a hobby as well and I'd like to become actively involved in it.

In the first extract the respondent refers to his ability in physics and his interest in working with cars and motorbikes. In the second extract he produces a reason for doing mechanical engineering in terms of job opportunities. Taken together these responses would appear to indicate that he is at the realistic stage of development. However, in extract 3 this judgement becomes

questionable when he refers to an interest in motor car racing through "watching TV" and through hearing about "all these designers who design these grand prix cars". This emphasis on the glamorous application betrays what Ginzberg would categorize as 'fantasy-type' thinking.

6.5 Reification through data loss: a simple story

Abraham (1984), in discussing the limits of content analysis, points out that content analysis only 'works' by imposing researchers' interpretative categorizations on the data so that data which is 'residual' and does not fit these categorizations is lost. Thus the categorizations used by researchers favouring this kind of methodology are not derived from the study of the data itself but is instead are derived from their own attempts to 'simplify' the data; they define how the data should be categorized. This can create a situation where categorizations in effect bolster *a priori* theoretical suppositions.

This problem is evident in the way in which the personality-matching and developmental theories were derived and validated. Holland's theory has, in the main, been evaluated using interest inventories and questionnaire data. These kind of data-gathering techniques restrict respondents to providing brief answers which, as we have seen, may well fit into the researcher's response categories but also can dramatically simplify the kind of choice responses which emerge in more 'natural' conversational contexts. Ginzberg, although using interview data to construct his theory, distilled his data through response categorizations. Thus in both cases the kind of variety and contradiction evident in the

extracts presented in this chapter was lost.

As we have seen, the characterizations offered by these theories provide only a partial and unconvincing description of respondents' accounts of their occupational choices. It is possible to find Holland's 'personality types' and evidence for Ginzberg's 'realistic stage' in the data. However, to do so, we have to ignore the variability and contradictions which undermine these categorizations. The simple theoretical account of discrete personality types and developmental stages slips away from us as we open up a dialogue with our respondents. Their accounts of their occupational choices reveal a much greater flexibility and ease of transformation than the Holland and Ginzberg categories allow for.

CHAPTER 7

THE CONSTRUCTION OF OCCUPATIONAL IDENTITIES IN CONVERSATION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is primarily concerned with research question 3 on the conversational functions of 'personality-expressive' talk and research question 7 on the extent to which respondents' choice accounts are based on a specialist or generally available knowledge of their occupations. By focusing on the conversational nature of the data the aim is to show how occupational identities are constructed in dialogue and how these constructions perform particular kinds of conversational work.

The analysis is guided by Garfinkel's (1967) view of the outcome occurring before the decision (see chapter 4). In other words, respondents' answers are not read as reports of what they actually took into account in choosing an occupation but as the product of attempts to retrospectively account for these choices in a particular social context and in a particular conversation. This reading will be seen to be supported by a closer look at respondents' constructions.

7.2 'Personality traits' and membership categories

It has been pointed out that the data appears to offer some support for Holland's view that personality directs occupational choice. The mechanical engineering and nursing respondents did after all refer to very different kinds of reasons for their choices. Mechanical engineering students tended to mention a preference for

working with machines and/or an interest in maths and physics at school as the basis for their choice, whereas the nursing students tended to mention a preference for working with people and helping them. It could therefore be argued that underlying personality traits are revealed by these very different kinds of account. However, an alternative perspective emerges when we consider the production of these accounts as functional and extended in time within conversation.

One way of investigating connections between occupations and personality traits is to consider these as the articulation of our conventional knowledge of membership categories (Sacks, 1972, 1974) (see chapter 4). It must be stressed that these categories, although stocks of conventional knowledge, are nevertheless linguistic devices used in the accomplishment of meaning-making and deployed by speakers for specific purposes. This will be made clear when looking at the ways in which respondents' construct their answers in certain ways during the interviews. However the main concern of this section is whether or not respondents' access specialist or generally available choice discourses.

Fifteen of the twenty mechanical engineering respondents when questioned about why they thought people would want to become nurses spoke of their caring or helping dispostion. Seven said that that those who take up nursing have little interest in monetary rewards and four of these respondents contrasted this with the 'job satisfaction' which nursing offers. Nine of these engineering respondents when asked if they thought there were any qualities required for taking up nursing mentioned patience. These kinds of responses correspond in large measure with those of the nursing

students. A comparison of the following sets of responses shows the extent to which they correspond with one another.

Mechanical engineering respondents

5ME7 (male, 22)

Int: Why do you think people want to become nurses?

Resp: To help people, they've got a view that they want to look after people.

1ME1 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you think people want to become nurses?

Resp: Em, to help the community. You need nurses, it's like you need engineers, you need nurses. Whoever does it they're being a help to the community.

5ME1 (male, 21)

Int: Why do you think people want to become nurses?

Resp: Well I'd say it's definitely not the money, that's sure. I think they might, eh they might have the reverse of what we have. We have the boiler suits and spanners because nobody wants to become mechanical engineers, they probably have their Florence Nightingale because everyone wants to become a nurse. I think that probably does have, eh does have a lot to do with it. That profession has a good public image, eh and it's quite a fashionable profession.

1ME3 (male, 17)

Int: Do you think there are any particular qualities you have to have to be a nurse?

Resp: You've got to care I suppose, you know, sort of be a loving person as it were. You've got to have sort of lots of patience, you know, sort of even if there's someone speaking back to you, nasty and stuff like that, you don't just sort of go over, hit them and walk out. So you've got to be able to take a lot. You've got to be interested in the job, you know, you've got to really want to do that or you won't get through it I don't think.

Nursing respondents

1NRS2 (female, 18)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Well when I was in sixth year I helped at (name of centre) which is a day centre for the physically and mentally handicapped once a week and I really enjoyed helping with it. So I really wanted to do something to help, em I really wanted to help.

4NRS10 (female, 21)

Int: Okay so you decided to do nursing, what was it that drew you towards it?

Resp: Em, the idea of helping people because I thought that would be useful to do for society. And em, I just generally think that this idea of offering to help is what nursing's about and a good way to do it.

4NRS1 (female, 21)

Int: When you say before you started you think of your angels what do you mean by that?

Resp: Well I think you're thinking more about the Florence Nightingale image of all these little nurses running about, you know, wiping the feavered brows and everything. You don't really think of the technical side of it, you think more of the basic nursing care, things like that...

1NRS8 (female, 19)

Int: Do you think there are any particular qualities you have to have to be a nurse?

Resp: Em, you have to be caring and understanding for one thing. You have to have patience as well and sort of know how to approach a person as well. Em, I've worked in bars and I've worked in a supermarket and that was good because you sort of got into contact with everyday - some people come in really grumpy and other people come in cheery but you have to stand there and be cheerful, you can't sort of turn around and go out of there (inaud) a bad morning, you know...

A comparison of these extracts shows a remarkable degree of similarity between the content of the nursing and mechanical engineering students' responses. It would appear that both groups are drawing upon an intersubjectively held knowledge of traits and

characteristics associated with the membership category of 'nurse'. Moreover, it can be seen how two of the mechanical engineering respondents packaged this knowledge so as to compare nursing with their own occupation. Respondent 1ME1 equates nurses and engineers in terms of their service to the community. Since she was only asked about nursing we can see that her answer is in effect an attempt to provide a favourable view of engineers. Respondent 5ME1 draws upon a different kind of discourse by contrasting what he claims is the low status of engineering with the "good public image" of nursing. The apparent function of this kind of discourse is explained later (see section 7.6) but suffice it to say for moment that this sort response is useful in putting a case for a higher status position for one's own occupation. These examples therefore show how a conventional knowledge of the category 'nurse' can be drawn upon and linguistically packaged to perform particular conversational functions.

Similar responses were also found across these groups of students regarding reasons for choosing mechanical engineering. Ten of the nursing respondents talked of an interest in science and maths as the basis for choosing engineering as a career. Three spoke of the choice of engineering as stemming from a preference for manual activities and four spoke of engineers as having an orientation for technical work and an interest in machines. Again a comparison of the following sets of responses demonstrates the extent to which they correspond with one another.

Nursing respondents

1NRS4 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you think people would want to go into that area?

Resp: I don't know, I mean it's like me, I'm interested in the sciences and things like that so that's the way I look at it. There's also things like when you're young the girl gets the first aid kit, the boy gets a Mechano set. I mean it's just, I don't know really, it's just like that and you're just interested in those (inaud).

1NRS6 (female, 19)

Int: Would you have considered choosing mechanical engineering or a branch of engineering?

Resp: I'm not that type of person.

Int: So what type of person do you need to be then to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: I wouldn't want to do that in the first place. I'm not interested in mechanics and things, some people are. I'm not the kind of person who takes a plug apart and then puts it back together again for the sake of doing it. If I did that I'd end up with millions of parts left over.

4NRS1 (female, 21)

Int: Do you think there are any qualities required to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: I don't know but I get the impression of mechanical engineers as sort of mathematically minded, you know, physics and maths, possibly good with their hands, I don't know.

4NRS8 (female, 21)

Int: Do you think you need any particular qualities to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: You have to be good at maths. You need to have a technical mind for working through things systematically (inaud) a haphazzard person. I think you'd have to have a logical mind.

Mechanical engineering respondents

5ME9 (male, 23)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well, it just started off from being an interest when I was young, making models from Mechano kits and mechanical subjects at school, I quite enjoyed them, I enjoyed the physics, maths side of it...

5ME10 (male, 25)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well it's a subject, engineering as a whole is a subject that I've been interested in since a child, building things, seeing how things work, taking things apart...

5ME1 (male, 21)

Int: How did you arrive at your particular decision to aim for this occupation?

Resp: ...Well, I think it was something at school that, you know, doing stuff like physics and maths although it isn't really mechanical engineering, I think it gives you a taste for it. But I didn't want to do something like applicable maths or that because although it was, you know, I was okay at maths but it wasn't something that really exicted me, I wanted something that, you know, you could work with your hands with as well...

1ME4 (male, 18)

Int: Do you think there's any particular qualities you have to have to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: You have to be able to think things through intelligently. I think maths, you have to be good at maths.

We can again see how respondents can draw upon a conventional knowledge of a membership category, in this instance that of 'engineer', to characterize category members and compare them with those in their own profession. Note how respondent 1NRS4 manages to produce a sex-role socialisation account of occupational choice based the toys children are given. Meanwhile respondent 1NRS6

explicity refers to 'types' of person when talking about engineers and nurses and contrasts the 'type' of person she is with those who are interested in taking things apart to see how they work.

From a comparison of the above examples it seems that respondents do not draw upon any specialized knowledge of their particular occupations when justifying their choices. What appears to be the case is that they draw upon a commonly held intersubjective knowledge base of category memberships. The function of this membership category discourse is examined in the next section.

One final point should be mentioned and that is that the responses of the nursing students were more varied and marked by greater uncertainty than those of the engineering students on nursing. This suggests that mechanical engineering, unlike nursing, does not have such a high public profile and so less intersubjective knowledge is available to those not initiated into it.

7.3 The utility of the 'standard membership category account'

Holland draws attention to the stereotypical nature of people's occupational perceptions claiming that "our everyday experience has generated a sometimes innacurate but apparently useful knowledge of what people in various occupations are like" (1985, p.9). He draws on evidence from studies (e.g., O'Dowd and Beardslee 1960, 1967; Marks and Webb, 1969) which have found that groups of different social status, age and sex have common occupational stereotypes. Moreover, Holland points out that were this not so, interest

inventories which are based on these stereotypes, would have little validity.

Undoubtedly shared bodies of knowledge about occupations exist. However, we have seen that respondents can package this kind of knowledge in such a way as to compare their own occupation with another. This conception differs from the notion of 'stereotype' or 'schema' which appears in much of the social cognition literature (e.g., Fiske and Taylor, 1984). 'Stereotype' or 'schema' conjure up stored feature lists and therefore imply a predictable and somewhat rigid response to a pre-defined environmental stimulus. In fact, we have seen that respondents use a conventional knowledge of category memberships creatively in conversation, in ways that cannot be predicted from the knowledge base itself, but only from the detailed sequence of conversational turns.

The question remains, why do respondents draw upon these standard membership categorizations when talking about their own choice of occupations? An answer to this question can be found by looking at differences in the sequences of talk between those who use these kind of responses early on in the interview and those who do not. Consider the following pairs of extracts involving students from each course.

5ME9 (male, 23)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well, it just started off from being an interest when I was young making models from Mechano kits and mechanical subjects at school, I quite enjoyed them, I enjoyed the physics, maths side of it. I wasn't certain I wanted to do

mechanical engineering, there's civil, electrical and chemical. I just had a look around and decided to come to the mechanical course (inaud several secs).

Int: Do you think there are any particular qualities required to be a mechanical engineer?

1NRS7 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to go into the field of nursing?

Resp: I think it will be a well worth job, I'd get a lot of job satisfaction from it, and everyday is going to be different, it's not going to be boring. And getting to know more people and helping them, feeling that you're doing something at the end of the day, it's not just wasted really.

Int: What drew you to nursing, you could speak to people in other jobs, why nursing?

Resp: Because you're helping them, they're not able to do something themselves so then you've - without being there they would have a harder time even though maybe they're not ill, just to speak to you and understand how they feel or if they are ill to get them through that stage.

Int: Did you consider any other careers?

5ME2 (male, 21)

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well, my borthers all did engineering so I was kind of led onto that when I left school and I had been brought up to go along (inaud). I'd always been interested in engineering, cars and motorbikes and stuff like that so it was just there wasn't any other option and I just went straight into it. I wasn't really thinking career-wise what particular area I wanted to go into, it was more or less it was engineering or nothing else.

Int: When you say there was nothing else, why did that arise then? Did they talk to you, or did you feel this was the right area for you?

Resp: Well, it was the right area for me anyway and I'd thought of other careers, you know you go through the range of them and engineering seemed to be the only reasonable one because I took to it quite naturally, with machinery and stuff like that, so I thought I'd may as well just continue in that line rather than tackling something else and finding that I wasn't cut out for it.

Int: Did your brothers tell you what it was about?

Int: Well I had a fair idea. I realise now that I was a wee

bit limited in my knowledge of what it covered, the whole range of subjects it covered, you know, thermodynamics and that sort stuff. And most of the subjects aren't that interesting, there's only a few specialist subjects that I find interesting. But if I had done something different, say civil or electrical or something like that, I knew that I wouldn't be as happy as I am just now because I don't find electrical that interesting and difficult to understand, similar with civil. So if I had to choose now I would have still made the same choice.

Int: What is it that draws you to mechanical as opposed to electrical or civil?

Resp: Well when I was younger my brothers always had some kind of machinery, there was motorbikes and cars and engines and stuff like that which I took to quite readily. Very little electrical work came into it or structural work and I'd alway felt it easier on the mathematical side of the subjects in school, the physical sciences rather than the other subjects, you know, literature or things like that.

Int: When you say working with machines, motorbikes and cars, is that mechanics then?

1NRS8 (female, 19)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Cause I've always had an interest in it from when I was young (inaud). My mum had been a nurse and I have lots of relatives who are nurses and they all sort of, not influenced, but I was always interested in what they had to say about their work. And I just like being with people but I didn't want stuck in an office and didn't want to be stuck in a shop or anything cause I've worked in a shop and I know what it's like, it's alright doing it part-time but it's not for me to be able to enjoy it. And, I just wanted to be a nurse cause I people, that's the main reason.

Int: You say there's people in your family who are nurses, did they influence you, did they talk to you?

Resp: When they'd come home they'd talk about their work and things like that, that's more or less it and that's it I said I was going to be a nurse and no arguing about it. I think mum was a bit surprised cause I'd never said anything when was younger, that I wanted to be a nurse cause usually you say you want to be something when you grow up and it changes every week but with me it's that I've always wanted to be a nurse and I think she was surprised that I was going through with it.

Int: When you say you've always wanted to be a nurse what is it then that has attracted you to this area? You say you like working with people but I could give you many jobs where you would be working with people, why specifically nursing?

Resp: It's more personal with the person being a nurse, it's not sort of working on a shop counter and saying that's fifty pounds please, that person means nothing to you. And I know you're not meant to get personally involved with your patients but you still have an interest in them whereas other jobs (inuad) to me, maybe you are, maybe other people think different but to me you're really interested in the person.

Int: But I could give you a job where you're interested in people, let's say a school teacher or lecturer. Now there you have an interest in your pupils or students, you're talking to people, you're helping them learn. I'm interested in why you want to do nursing, I mean you've mentioned your relatives and it would seem to me that they held sway with you, a great influence on you.

Resp: Well, teaching for a start wouldn't be for me because I couldn't stand up and tell them (inuad), it's not me. Em, I've thought about all them things but I've always sort of swayed towards nursing.

Int: What other careers did you think about?

The first pair of extracts are examples of the 'standard membership category account' for choosing each of these occupations. They display a common sense view of the characteristics associated with these occupations; knowledge which Holland put to use in his personality and occupational typology. Respondent 5ME9 mentions the 'realistic' and 'investigative' elements of the mechanical engineer subtype; an interest in construction kits and mechanical subjects at school, and an interst in the sciences. Note how once this response is given the interviewer begins a new question topic. Two question-and-answer sequences are required to establish the 'social' and 'artistic' character of respondent 1NRS7. Her first answer stresses the importance she attaches to working with people, and for variety of work. The question following this response is a form of other-initiated repair, that is, she is asked to be more specific about her choice of nursing. The respondent duly recognizes this and obliges by elaborating on the point she made in her initial answer about helping people. The interviewer, satisfied with this response, moves onto a new question topic.

These short conversational exchanges can be contrasted with the protracted question-and-answer sequences of the second pair of extracts. These respondents stress 'family influence' in their choice of occupations (see research question 5). Respondent 5ME2 begins by alluding to the influence of his brothers who had taken up engineering, and of his long-standing interest in working with machines. Respondent 1NRS8 points out that her mother was a nurse and that she has other relatives in the same occupation. She also mentions her preference for working with people but of not wanting to be "stuck" in an office or shop. These respondents would therefore appear to have what attribution theorists would term an external locus of control, that is they attribute their 'choice' of occupation to the influence of others. On the other hand, respondents who give the 'standard membership category account' would appear to have an internal locus of control, that is, they attribute their choice to themselves.

In both interviews the interviewer pursues the extent to which the respondents were influenced in their choices. In both cases the respondents detect the import of this questioning and respond by referring to their long-standing interest in their intended occupations. In answering this question respondent 5ME2 claims that he had "thought of other careers" thus contradicting what he had said in his initial response that "there wasn't any other option...it was more or less engineering or nothing else". Thus external influences on his choice are played down and he now appears to have made a considered decision. He is then able to refer to his interest in machines as the deciding factor in his choice. At this stage respondent 1NRS8 still refers to her family

members who would "talk about their work" but is careful to point out that it was she who decided upon nursing ("I said I was going to be a nurse and no arguing about it"... "I've always wanted to be a nurse"). It now appears as though these respondents have exercised personal control over their choice; they are, in attributional terms, making 'internal' attributions of causality (cf. Kelley, 1972). Again a social cognition approach which labelled one response 'internal' and another 'external' would miss the way in which the descriptions of influence change to satisfy conversational demands placed upon them by the interviewer's questions.

Despite these responses which refer to the independent nature of the respondents' choices they are pursued further about the nature of their decisions. After being asked about the information he received from his brothers, respondent 5ME2 is asked about the specific branch of engineering he chose to enter. It is at this point that he draws upon the 'standard membership category account'. Thus he again refers to his experience of working with machines but also adds that he was interested in physics and maths at school. In the interview with respondent 1NRS8 the interviewer challenges her to be more specific about her choice of nursing by providing other examples of occupations that involve working closely with people. However, unlike the engineering respondent she does not refer to any interests or preferences 'characteristic' of nurses but answers the question in a direct manner by providing a reason why she is unsuitable for teaching. She then reiterates her long-standing interest in nursing. In both cases the interviewer moves on to another question topic.

From this analysis we can see that the justification of occupational choice in terms of a 'standard membership category account' is more readily accepted by the interviewer than a 'family influence account'. Furthermore, an account which although referring to the independence of the decision made is nevertheless still probed further to elicit the basis of the choice, that is, the 'personality' of the individual. Respondents who therefore 'collude' with the interviewer and refer to characteristics they possess conventionally associated with their chosen occupation establish their suitability for such work whereas respondents who refer to the influence of others in their choice leave this to be established. It is therefore no wonder that the majority of respondents justify their occupational choices using the 'standard membership category account'; conversationally, it is much easier.

We have seen how the 'standard membership category account' and the 'family influence account' can be produced within the one interview, they are not just limited to being given by different respondents. This is important for it shows that respondents can have at their disposal more than one method of accounting for their choices. Indeed these two kinds of accounts could be viewed as differing 'linguistic repertoires' (Potter and Litton, 1985; Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Both were drawn upon by respondent 5ME2 to do particular conversational work, first to show a family 'tradition' of engineering and then to point out that he had not simply followed this tradition blindly but that his own interests in machines, maths and science also had a bearing on his choice.

The foregoing analysis also demonstrates how respondents can determine the structure of their own interviews by 'tuning in' to

the conversational expectations of the interviewer. Thus the idea of a 'standard' interview where the interviewer is unaffected by the conversational acts performed by the interviewee would appear to be something of a myth unless it is no more than a 'speaking questionnaire'.

7.4 Problematic responses as categorization artifacts

In the previous chapter we saw how several respondents gave responses which are at odds with what would be expected according to Holland's characterization of their occupational 'personalities'. However, as we shall see, these responses are only problematic if one attempts to categorize them in accordance with Holland's typology. If we abandon Holland's typology and focus upon conversational achievements, the structure of these responses are revealed.

We shall see the utility of this approach by considering two responses which are problematic if viewed from Holland's perspective but become clearly comprehenisble when analyzed in terms of the functions they perform within particular coversational sequences.

5ME1 (male, 21)

...I think you've got to be able to get on with people because nearly all of the mechanical engineers that are employed have a lot of people under their charge and they'll be under the charge of someone, so you've got to be able to get on with both of them. I I don't think it's important to be academically brilliant but I think it's quite important to have quite a lot of common sense because that's, you know, what most engineering is. Most of the day-to-day problems aren't differential equations and that, it's you know, just mundane things.

4NRS1 (female, 21)

...I enjoy the technical side of it as much as anything now, the challenge of being in a sort of high-tech area and specialist areas where you've got to know it all.

These respondents' statements appear to run contrary to what would be expected according to Holland's predictions. Respondent 5ME1 mentions the ability to work with people as an important quality required for engineering and plays down the 'investigative' side of the work whilst respondent 4NRS1 refers to her enjoyment of working in "high-tech" areas.

We must therefore examine these responses within the conversational sequences in which they are embedded.

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well, although I said my dad was a teacher, he was originally an engineer and this had some bearing on it, why I wanted to enter engineering. And I realized it was something that, you know, I could go on and do a course and it would quite easy to find a job when I came out, you know, it would be sort of something that wouldn't be very difficult to find job, it would be something that I think the job, something that you don't have to stay in if you don't want to, you could go on and do a lot of other things involved industry.

Int: What kind of other things?

Resp: Well, I mean you could go on once you've em, been in engineering for a while to sort of do labour relations, marketing or even accountancy because I think someone who's got an engineering background, you know, if they go into this field they can make, em you know, a lot better job than perhaps a lot people that are in it who don't really know a lot about products, components, things like this, that sort of stuff.

Int: You say your father was an engineer before becoming a teacher. Did he influence you in any way in your decision?

Resp: No, I mean he didn't put any pressure on me but I think eh, I think I saw his career progressing and thought perhaps that's the way I could progress as well, you know going on from being an engineer, in the middle management going on business trips all this kind of thing, you know.

Int: Do you think there are any particular qualities required to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: Oh yeah, I think you've got to be able to get on with people because nearly all of the mechanical engineers that are employed have a lot of people under their charge and they'll be under the charge of someone so you've got to be able to get on with both of them. I don't think it's important to be academically brilliant but I think it's quite important to have quite a lot of common sense because that's what, you know, what most engineering is. Most of the day-to-day problems aren't differential equations and that, it's you know, just mundane things. But I think common sense, being able to get on with people, having a bit of confidence as well to sort of stick by your guns, you know, make a decision and stand by it, you know, just don't back out.

Int: How did you arrive at your particular decision to aim for this occupation?

Resp: What as a mechanical engineer? Well, I think it was something at school that, you know, doing stuff like physics and maths although it isn't really mechanical engineering it sort of gives you a taste for it. But I didn't want to do something like applicable maths or that because it was, you know, I was okay at maths but it wasn't something that really excited me. I wanted something that, you know, you could work with your hands as well because I'd did eh, woodwork "O" grade in my final year just as a fun subject, but it was great fun. I felt it was better than just sitting around all day. So I was looking for something that, you know, did sort of allow me to use my maths and physics and that, but also where I would be able to use my hands as well.

We can now see that respondent 5ME1 has offered a 'family influence account' and also incorporates the theme that mechanical engineering offers a springboard into management. This theme appears to have been developed through the questions asked by the interviewer which focus on the respondent's view of engineering as route to a managerial career. The final question in this sequence does not pick up on anything the respondent said previously and is therefore a change in the direction of questioning. The interviewer makes no reference to managerial work in this question but the respondent refers back to this theme and discusses the interpersonal skills required for such work. The type of skills or qualities mentioned are therefore determined by the career path

which the respondent has already mapped out in his previous responses. In other words, the theme established in the previous sequence of question-and-answer turns has been carried over into in this response. Thus we have an example of the reflexive nature of the interview talk. The respondent is not simply presenting his views on engineering and management but rather his responses are shaped by the nature of the conversation itself.

In the last question of this extract the respondent is asked about his decision. The phrasing of this question assumes that his choice reflects a career decision process. His response conforms to the 'standard membership category account' in order to meet the demands of the question and therefore differs from the 'family influence account' he had given earlier. Thus an interest in physics and maths and a preference for "working with his hands" are now given as the basis for choosing engineering.

The question-and-answer sequence in which the extract from the interview with respondent 4NRS1 is embedded is presented below.

> Int: Why did you want to enter the field of nursing?
>
> Resp: Well originally, I mean I'd always wanted to be a nurse, it's a calling from when I was very small, I've got nursing in my family and a lot of my family members are nurses. Before I started it was just, you know, you think of your angels sort of thing. Now it's more a case of thinking what nursing is and I enjoy...
>
> Int: When you say before you started you think of your angels what do you mean by that?
>
> Resp: Well, I think you're thinking more about the Florence Nightingale image of all these little nurses running about, you know, wiping the feavered brows and everything. You don't really think of the technical side of it, you think more of the basic nursing care, things like that. I enjoy the technical side of it as much as anything now, the challenge of being in a sort of high-tech area and specialist areas where you've got to know it all.

Int: Is this something you're particularly interested in, high-tech areas?

Resp: Well I enjoy that as I said but I wouldn't want to work in any place where you're getting away from the caring as well. I mean I wouldn't want to get away from, you know, being able to sit with a patient. I mean every area you work in is different, I mean there are some areas or certain sisters who frown on you sitting with patients and talking to them. It depends what you see nursing as, I mean I see that as very important, the communication side of things (inaud).

This respondent begins with a 'family influence account' although in this instance the interviewer does not pursue the issue of influence but rather focuses on what she meant in referring to nurses as "angels". The respondent answers in such a way as to indicate that course entrants have a somewhat naive view of what nursing involves, or in Ginzberg's terms they think in 'fantasy stage' terms ("...you're thinking more about the Florence Nightingale image of all these little nurses running about, you know, wiping the feavered brows and everything"...) She contrasts this 'simple' view with what nursing is 'really' like, an occupation which not only involves "basic nursing care" but which also has a "technical side". This, in effect, presents an image of the nurse as not only a humanitarian carer but as a skilled operator of medical machinery. However, note how when she is asked if she particulary likes this side to nursing she immediately reverts back to pointing out the 'social' aspects of the job. Her answer conforms to the 'standard membership category account' in order to ensure that her discussion of technical aspects of the job does not leave open the question of her suitability in terms of interpersonal skills. We can therefore see again how the development of the conversation and the functions being performed within it shape the content of responses.

The analysis undertaken on the above examples is demonstrative of the explanatory power of focusing on the conversational flow of the data and the specific functions which responses appear to serve. This analysis is, of course, not exhaustive and it might be possible to offer alternative and/or additional explanations of the conversational acts being performed.

7.5 Constructing an identity through membership category comparisons

It was noted in the previous chapter that a number of the final year nursing students expressed dissatisfaction with what they regarded as the 'task-orientated' nature of general nursing. This was particularly the case amongst those who had elected to aim for registration in psychiatric nursing. These respondents often contrasted the 'task-orientated' approach of general nursing with the 'patient-orientated' approach of psychiatric nursing. The way in which this contrast can be developed within a single response is shown in the example below.

> 4NRS9 (female, 21, psychiatric nursing)
>
> Int: You are doing psychiatric nursing. Why do you want to work in this particular area?
>
> Resp: Well I like general as well but when I was in psychiatric, I did acute psychiatric last year and it was just so brilliant, I enjoyed it so much that I looked forward to going into my work every day. And I just got a buzz out of it that I didn't get in general. I felt that working in general, once you know how to do something like put up a drip or something, and once you had so many appendectomys or whatever, it's just the same thing over and over. And in psychiatric every patient is different, every psychiatric illness you can't put a label on it, they're all different. I just get a buzz out of it, the unknown really cause nobody really knows what causes the things and the best way to treat it and there's so many diverse ways of treating it and that's what excites me as well. And also the way you can build up a

> relationship with the patient in psychiatric whereas you can't in general, they're in and out and you never really get to know the person. But I like the close relationship that you can maybe build up.

Although this respondent says she likes general nursing she nevertheless characterizes it as somewhat routine (..."it's just the same thing over and over"). The inclusion of the statement "I like general nursing" may serve to ward off any thoughts on the interviewer's part that her critcisms of general nursing have arisen because she is unsuitable for it. Instead she refers to her experience of both general and psychiatric nursing and, by comparing them, constructs an image of the kind of person she is and thereby justifies her choice. Thus psychiatric nursing is presented as less routinized (..."every patient is different", ..."there's so many diverse ways of treating it") and more patient-centred (..."you can build up a relationship with the patient whereas you can't in general...") than general nursing.

This sort of contrast poses a problem if one attempts to understand the respondent's answer in terms of Holland's typology. Her response emphasizes, in Holland's terminology, the 'artistic' and 'social' elements of her personality. This is what would be expected according to Holland's subtype for general nursing. However as we have seen in order to justify her choice of psychiatric over general nursing she contrasts the two thereby offering a description of general nursing which conflicts with Holland's.

It is perhaps useful to consider such responses from a social identity theory perspective. (e.g., Tajfel, 1978; Turner 1982). The theory distinguishes between personal and social identities and is

based on the assumption that when a social identity is salient an individual's self-perception is based on attributes common to their particular social group or category rather than on personal attributes. It is proposed that individuals seek to maintain a positive social identity in order to enhance their self-esteem. One way this can be accomplished is through intergroup comparisons. Thus it is argued that in situations where social identity is salient individuals will tend to represent their own particular group more positively than other groups perceived as being comparable.

As has been stated already this investigation is exclusively concerned with understanding the conversational acts being performed within these interviews and 'brackets off' the issue of intrapsychic explanations. Therefore, without presupposing the cognitive processes proposed by social identity theorists (e.g., the mechanisms by which social identity becomes salient), it is possible to identify correspondences between the data and the intergroup comparisons central to the theory. In other words, we can view psychiartic nursing respondents' comparisons between psychiatric and general nursing as achieving a positive work identity within the social context of the interview.

7.6 Grievance discourse

Let us consider three examples of what I shall call 'grievance discourse' of a similar kind to that looked at in chapter 6 (see pages 83 and 87).

4NRS4 (female, 23)

Int: What about pay, did you consider that before you came on the course?

Resp: No, I didn't consider that at all. I'm thinking more about it now and I think to myself after doing four-and-a-half years at college I get a degree at the end of it knowing that it's (inaud) about nursing and I know more than the RGNs anyway. I think we get very badly paid compared - at the end of the day you're coming out a staff nurse, the same as an RGN whereas they're only doing a three year course and the detail, the detail of work is nothing in comparison. And I feel we don't get paid enough.

Int: Do you think there should be a difference between the RGNs and BSc nurses?

Resp: I think there should be, definitely.

Int: What about nurses' pay in general?

Resp: In general? For the amount of work you put in and the hours you do, I don't think we get paid enough. I don't think we are cause you're doing eight, nine hour shifts, you're getting up at six or half-past five in the morning, getting ready, coming to work and everything. By the time you get home, by the time you finish your shift it's usually four o'clock and by the time you get home it's five, half-past five and your whole day's gone and you're just too tired, you've been working all day. It takes a lot out of you, I think it's very stressful in a way. It takes a lot out of you because you've got to be on guard all the time, if you don't think what you're doing that could be people's lives and things like that and you've got to be alert all the time. I think it drains you both mentally and physically and I don't think we're getting paid enough for what's expected.

5ME4 (male, 22)

Int: What do you think most people think mechanical engineering is about?

Resp: The usual, sort of the guy with the spanner and boiler suit working with engines, em not so much the theory. It's more hands on stuff they think about, they just don't know the depth we go into.

4NRS9 (female, 21, psychiatric nursing)

Int: Suppose I were to interview a cross-section of people and ask them what nursing is about, what do you think they would say?

Resp: Oh, caring for the sick, and taking temperatures, and cleaning up, making patients comfortable, taking bed pans away. I don't think they have much of an idea exactly what's

> involved in it. The doctor's hand-maiden, I think that would be the image that a lot of them would have. They don't see nursing as a separate profession in the way that we see it, we're just underdogs to the doctor, just carrying out their orders.

Respondent 4NRS4 attaches a greater importance to financial rewards than would be expected of a 'social type'. The responses given by respondents 5ME4 and 4NRS9 also appear to run contrary to what would be expected according to Holland's typology. Respondent 5ME4 presents mechanical engineering as being commonly regarded as a relatively low status occupation, despite Holland's claim that 'realistic types' value status, and respondent 4NRS9 presents nursing as being commonly regarded as 'task-orientated' rather than a 'social' occupation.

The functional nature of this discourse can be viewed as corresponding to the 'strategic response' approach to social identity theory (van Knippenberg, 1984; van Knippenberg and van Oers, 1984). This approach suggests that that in-group and out-group descriptions and evaluations are deployed strategically from a negotiative perspective and are not simply, as originally proposed in social identity theory, private perceptions. As in social identity theory it is proposed that individuals accentuate intergroup differences in favour of in-group inputs (i.e., what the group contributes to a task organization or society in general). However, the strategic response approach departs from the predictions of social identity theory in that it proposes that individuals accentuate negative in-group outcomes (i.e., costs such as stress) and/or emphasize positive out-group outcomes (i.e., rewards such as career prospects).

In the case of respondent 4NRS4 the initial question on pay is answered in such a manner so as to compare degree (in-group) and non-degree (RGN) (out-group) nurses. As would be predicted in accordance with a straightforward application of social identity theory the respondent compares these two nursing groups so as to emphasize the superiority of the in-group in terms of theoretical insight ("...I know more than the RGNs anyway ...the detail of the work is nothing in comparison...") (see van Knippenberg and van Oers, 1984). However, note how in the same response she also compares the financial rewards of the two groups and claims that degree nurses are "very badly paid" (i.e., a negative in-group outcome). In other words, she is making a case for a pay differential between these two groups on the basis of academic qualification and indeed this is checked upon and confirmed in the following question and answer. In the final response of this sequence we can see how she provides a catalogue of the adverse aspects of nursing (i.e., negative in-group outcomes) thereby making a case for higher financial rewards for nurses in general. From this response it can be seen that explicit intergroup comparisons need not be made in order to make such a case.

None of the first year respondent's gave this kind of response because for them the interview was primarily about occupational choice. Many of these students were attempting to establish their suitability for the job by way of the 'standard membership category account'. This involved playing down the importance of salary in favour of the intangible rewards gained from helping and caring for patients. The final year students, on the other hand, had passed the assesments and stayed the course, there was little need for

them to establish their 'disposition' for nursing for they were on the verge of registration and therefore it seems likely that they regarded themselves as members of the nursing profession. Hence these students were able use questions about salary in order to put a case for improved financial rewards.

The examples involving respondents 5ME4 and 4NRS9 also show how strategic responses can be directed at making a case for a higher status position. Both examples involve variants of the same basic question concerning commonly held conceptions about these occupations. Respondent 5ME4 claims that most people think of mechanical engineers as being synonymous with mechanics (i.e., comparable with a relatively lower status occupation and therefore representing a negative in-group outcome) and that this is a misconception because it does not acknowledge the theoretical "depth" of their work (positive in-group input). Respondent 4NRS9 also claims that there is a common misconception about her occupation, that it is thought of as task-orientated and that nurses are subordinate to doctors (i.e., lower in status in comparsion with doctors and therefore representing a negative in-group outcome). The inclusion of the the word "just" when she says "we're just underdogs....just carrying out their orders", contains the implication that that there is more to nursing that "just" these aspects and that she disagrees with this misconception. Indeed she points out that nursing is a "profession", a word which connotates a higher occupational status.

7.7 Conversation and cognition

The analyses offered in this chapter show how a focus on the dialogue of the interviews can pay dividends in terms of providing an insight into conversational processes and the meshing of questions and answers. Although it may seem somewhat tautological, it is nevertheless important to point out that answers are answers to questions. The phrasing of questions influence how respondents answer and, as we have seen, responses in turn offer conversational pointers for further questions. Thus the questions asked in an interview cannot be simply regarded as means of uncovering pre-supposed stable cognitions, such as occupational stereortypes. Researchers who adopt this position run the risk of treating the way responses are linguistically packaged simply as 'wrapping' to be disguarded in order to get at the cognitive 'mystery' inside. No account is taken of the conversational nature of the interaction and the conversational functions that respondents' answers may serve.

Of course those who favour a social cognition approach may argue that the conversational 'mess' which has been generated in these interviews would best be avoided, either through the use of a more structured approach such as a questionnaire. They might argue that such an approach would 'tidy' up the data and hence would be less likely to obscure underlying cognitions. Two arguments can be offered against this sort of objection to the semi-structured interview approach adopted in this study. First, this position still does not acknowledge that the phrasing of questions can influence the responses given, even where respondent's are required

to simply tick response categories in a questionnaire. Secondly, as was noted in chapter 2, to restrict the data in such a manner constrains respondents when answering and does not allow them to use their conversational skills. People do not interact with one another by way of questionnaires but through conversation. Thus to constrain the way they answer on the grounds of methodological neatness fails to take account of the reality of interaction.

CHAPTER 8

'DEVELOPMENTAL DISCOURSE' IN DIALOGUE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is principally concerned with research question 4 on the conversational functions of 'realistic stage' accounts. Also considered are apparent instances of 'fantasy stage' responses (see research question 5). As in the previous chapter it is argued that respondents are faced with the task of retrospectively accounting for their choices in order to render them as 'sense-able'.

8.2 Ask a 'realistic' question...

It has been pointed out that a superficial search of the data might support the psychological reality of Ginzberg's 'realistic stage' of vocational development (see chapter 6). However, a close examination of the question-and-answer sequences provides an alternative perspective on these responses.

'Realistic stage' responses were most commonly found in answer to certain questions. Examples are given below.

> 5ME4 (male, 22)
>
> Int: Why did you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?
>
> Resp: From school I found I was best at maths, physics and technical subjects and, from the occupations I looked at I thought that mechanical engineering sounded the most interesting. And I read the literature on it and decided that that was the best choice, what I was best at and most interested in.

1ME2 (female, 17)

Int: Did you consult any careers advisers at school or careers literature?

Resp: Yeah, it was the careers teacher who told me about engineering because I was just looking for something to do with physics. So I went and found out more about it, I went to the open days and things at the colleges and that, just found out more about it, got more information and decided that's what I wanted to do.

1ME10 (male, 18)

Int: Looking back how did you arrive at your particular decision?

Resp: In my final year at school I was resitting my maths higher trying to upgrade it cause I failed it. And I had done physics and chemistry and I did engineering just for something to do and found it interesting.

1NRS2 (female, 18)

Int: Did you consider any other careers?

Resp: I considered teaching for a while cause I like working with kids. But then I decided once I'd been to (name of day centre for the handicapped) and to the camp I decided that I'd prefer nursing.

4NRS9 (female, 21)

Int: Did you consider any other careers?

Resp: Teaching, primary teaching, and I thought about, I was interested in drama at school, I was in a drama club and that. And I thought about going into drama college, acting or something like that. But I thought I would be practical, there isn't much chance of a job, it's not a very secure thing and I thought it would be more practical to do something like nursing, you're always sure of a job at the end of it.

References to an ability or interest in school subjects relevant to engineering were the most common reasons given by mechanical engineering respondents for their choices as the three engineering extracts above demostrate. Although the questions are different in each case the responses all contain references to school subjects. In addition respondent 5ME4 implies that he was engaged in

'exploring' and 'crystallizing' (see chapter 1, p.15) his choice ("from the occupations I looked at") whilst respondent 1ME2 refers to a process of 'exploration' after having engineering suggested as a possible career by a careers adviser. The nursing respondents on the other hand most commonly gave 'realistic stage' responses when questioned about other careers they had considered. Respondents 1NRS2 and 4NRS9, for example, mention other careers they considered along with the reasons they were rejected in favour of nursing.

It is useful to consider the wider context of these interviews. Respondents had prior knowledge that they were on the topic of occupational and course choice. It is therefore likely that they would have least expected to be asked 'why' questions about their choices. Indeed the rationale behind the interviews was that respondents could provide reasons as to why they came to be doing their respective courses. This assumption of deliberate choice is manifest in the questions themselves. The inclusion of the word "want" in the opening question (Why do you want to enter the field of...?) assumes that some kind of choice was made. The question "How did you arrive at your particular decision"? assumes a decision-making process. Similarly the questions concerning other careers that may have been considered or advisers who were consulted also assume such a process.

Although these questions were planned in that decisions were made about their inclusion in the interview schedule and how they were to be phrased, the assumption that respondents would provide rational ('realistic stage') answers was itself never questioned. Perhaps this is because, as Harré (1983) argues, our social order

places an imperative on adults to talk in rational terms (and of course, this 'realistic stage' discourse is part and parcel of the established tradition of psychology doctorates). However, through an analysis of the interviewer's own questions the implicit assumption of, and therefore the conversational demand for, rational discourse has been brought to the fore. Thus Ginzberg's discovery of 'realistic stage' accounting in his older interviewees' responses may be wholly or partially accounted for by implicit expectations embedded in the general social context of his interviews and in the questions he used.

As was previously noted answers are answers to questions. Questions and answers are inextricably linked and must be considered together. The assumption of deliberate choice inherent in the phrasing of these questions is not lost on respondents who would appear to provide the interviewer with what he is looking for. This helps us understand why respondents often extend their answers beyond the bounds of the questions by providing additional information about their 'choice'. Further support for this claim can be found in the responses of those who claim not to have made a conscious decision.

1ME10 (male, 18)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Em, to tell you the truth I don't really know why but at school the subjects I took were maths, physics, chemistry and engineering. I was interested in (inaud) more numbers and things like that rather than theory, listening to theory all the time. And just the course appealed to me.

5ME6 (male, 21)

Int: How did you arrive at your decision then in choosing this particular occupation?

Resp: Em, really just the subjects I chose at school, there was no actual conscious decision. I mean, I wanted to go into the field of science and technology from about thirteen or fourteen, I knew that. But just the subjects pushed me toward this. It probably was intentional but there was no day I woke up and said I want to be a mechanical engineer.

Both these respondents begin by pointing out that they did not make a deliberate choice. Yet both offer rationalizations by referring to subjects they took at school. This would appear to arise because they can detect through the phrasing of the question that the the interviewer is looking for some kind of reason to explain their selection of a specific vocational course. By considering the questions ("... want to enter;"...arrive at your decision") we can see how difficult it is for respondents to maintain their 'no decision' account for undertaking a vocational course. The questions oblige respondents to provide reasons and rationalizations. However, once given, these can be read by the interviewer as providing an historical account of the origin of the choice process, that is, respondents were interested in school subjects relevant to engineering and saw their course as enabling them to pursue these interests.

8.3 Contradictions as categorization artifacts

In attempting to make their choice of occupations 'sense-able' some respondents gave responses which were apparently contradictory if attempting to use them to ascertain 'realistic stage' thinking. This can be seen in a pair of extracts from the interview with

respondent 1ME1 on page 91 in chapter 6.

In the first extract the respondent refers to finding out about mechanical engineering and therefore appears to have been engaged in a process of rational decision-making, or in Ginzberg's terms, 'exploration' and 'crystallization'. However, this view becomes problematic when considering the responses given in the second extract. Her responses here simply do not accord with what she had said earlier and make it impossible to decide whether or not her choice of mechanical engineering was based on a knowledge of the occupation. While this is problematic for those, like Ginzberg, who wish to categorize responses as revealing developmental stages, it is not problematic but interesting when we focus on the development of conversation in interviews.

By doing so we can see that respondent 1ME1 offers two different rationalizations or justifications for being on the mechanical engineering course. The first establishes her interest in mechanical engineering by reference to an information-search in order to find out more about it. The second shifts the emphasis from occupational choice to course choice and provides a rationalization for her entry onto the course; to find out about mechanical engineering! Thus from within the conversation, her responses are unproblematic and 'sense-able' in that they achieve different conversational ends within a short space of time.

It was also noted in chapter 6 that several of the nursing respondents claimed that they had 'always' wanted to be a nurse or had done so from an early age. However, when later asked if they

had considered other careers some of these respondents claimed they had, for example:

> 1NRS8 (female, 19)
>
> Resp: ....usually you say you want to be something when you grow up and it changes every week but with me it's that I've always wanted to be a nurse...
>
> Int: What other careers did you think about?
>
> Resp: Em, other jobs in hospitals.
>
> Int: Such as?
>
> Resp: Radiography, then I thought I don't have physics so I put that out of it. And then there's occupational therapy and physiotherapy and I thought no, I want more personal contact with the patient rather than in and out really.

The claim "I've always wanted to be a nurse" can be thought of as a useful way of establishing the respondent's vocational commitment in an occupation that is commonly associated with dedication and the ideal of service. However, when faced with a question which appears to demand a 'realistic stage' answer the respondent obliges by referring to occupations she claims to have considered along with her reasons for rejecting them in favour of nursing. There is no conversational contradiction here, the respondent successfully communicates commitment and rationality. Neither historical accuracy nor consistency in terms of characterizing the choice are required. Indeed even if challenged, an account of 'checking out vocational commitment in a rational decision-making manner' could have probably been constructed.

8.4 The maintenance of rational ('realistic stage') accounts

Respondents were often asked 'follow-up' questions, particularly on the basis of their responses to the opening question. This in effect set respondents the task of attempting to maintain their choices as 'sense-able' across succeeding question-and-answer turns. Thus choice realism can be viewed as a construction which emerges and is maintained through the question-and-answer sequences of the interview. This can be illustrated through the analysis of two extracts, the first involving a mechanical engineering student, the second a nursing student.

1ME6 (male, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Because I think it strongly relates to the subject I'm best at, physics. I've always enjoyed this kind of work, maybe not exactly the same thing, but working on cars, motorbikes and things. It's a slightly higher that's all.

Int: When you say you enjoy working with cars and motorbikes is this a hobby?

Resp: Yeah, more of a hobby.

Int: And what sort of things do you do then?

Resp: Eh, just (inaud) some cars and things, just basically help my dad service the car.

Int: Yeah, but I could say then that that is surely being more of a mechanic than a mechanical engineer.

Resp: I realise that but I'm maybe slightly more intelligent, more able to become a mechanical engineer as opposed to a time-served mechanic.

Int: Do you see any difference between what a mechanic does (Resp: Oh yeah) and a mechanical engineer? What is the main difference then?

Resp: Well a mechanic is more using his hands to repair whereas a mechanical engineer might possibly design as opposed to repair.

Int: Is this an area you're interested in, design?

Resp: Yes, that's what I put on my application form. I hope to go into design at the end of the five years, if I get five years.

Int: You say you're interested in physics, why then not take up a career involving physics?

Resp: I'm not that deeply into the subject, I always like to broaden my horizons, not get narrow-minded into physics. I did consider doing physics certainly, but I feel this is the better subject to do.

1NRS4 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: I suppose I could say like everybody else when I was young nursing was what I wanted to do cause everybody else says that so. But I think every little girl gets her nurses uniform for her Christmas and wants to be that. But then I think there's more, I mean there was quite a lot of different jobs I wanted to do at various stages but I think by the time I got to secondary school it was the sciences I was more interested in. So I started to look for jobs within that field but I prefer talking, I love talking, I love speaking to people and so I definitely knew I wanted a job working with people. And so I started to look round that kind of field, and I'd done voluntary work in a hospital and when I actually got to the job I thought, yeah this is what I want to do.

Int: You say you like speaking to people, why not choose another kind of occupation where you're speaking to people?

Resp: Eh well I like sciences as well, things like that, I like the medical side of it.

Int: What is it that draws you to that area?

Resp: Specifically nursing? I think it was experiencing it. I don't know, I mean I find it really hard to say well, you know, I'd like this job if you've never actually tried it yourself. I think when I actually did voluntary work and saw what the job involved it really appealed to me then, actually experiencing nursing.

In his answer to the opening question Respondent 1ME6 refers to his ability in physics which he points out is related to mechanical engineering. In the remainder of his answer he links mechanical

engineering with "working on cars and motorbikes and things" although he claims the former is at "at a slightly higher level". His claim to have "always enjoyed this kind of work" would appear to perform a similar function to that mentioned in the previous section, namely, to demonstrate through a long-standing interest, his vocational commitment and suitability for the job. Indeed, the nature of this interest is checked upon by the interviewer's next two questions and the respondent's answers would appear to confirm the impression of his choice as arising out of his mechanical interests.

However, the interviewer subsequently throws a metaphorical spanner in the works by challenging the respondent to distinguish the sort of work he has mentioned and that of being a mechanical engineer. The respondent then justifies his mechanical engineering choice by claiming that he is "maybe slightly more intelligent" than what is be required for a "time-served mechanic" training. The interviewer's next question shows that he regards the respondent's answer as either incomplete or vague since he rephrases the challenge, this time as a direct question requiring the respondent to distinguish between the two. At this point the respondent differentiates the two occupations in terms of "repair and design". The interviewer then picks up on the respondent's reference to design work and the respondent substantiates his interest in this aspect of engineering by mentioning he had put down an interest in this kind of work on his application form. The next question shifts the conversation back to the respondent's declared interest in physics and challenges him to provide a rationale for choosing mechanical engineering over a career more

directly concerned with physics. The respondent now plays down his interest in this discipline by claiming that he is not "that deeply into the subject" and that he does not want to be "narrow-minded".

By unravelling the nature of the dialogue between interviewer and respondent we can see how the appearance of 'realistic stage' discourse has been provided and sustained. This involved a number of qualifications and variations in the description of his choice, but over a sequence of turns different responses achieve a coherent overall impression of rational decision-making. However, as we shall see later (p.141) the same respondent could talk in a very different manner about his choice.

The extract taken from the interview with respondent 1NRS4 reveals how 'realistic stage' discourse can be maintained by referring to aspects given in her inital answer when responding to follow-up questions. The respondent begins by suggesting that gender socialisation is responsible for her 'choice' of nursing. However, the remainder of her answer is directed at showing the considered nature of her choice. She claims to have considered "a lot of different jobs...at various stages" and refers to her interest in science. She then mentions her liking for interpersonal contact and claims that this became the basis of her choice. Next she attaches importance to her experience of voluntary work in a hospital when deciding upon nursing.

The interviewer picks up on one aspect of her answer, her liking for interpersonal contact, and poses a question which acts as a challenge to be more specific about her choice of nursing over

other occupations which provide an opportunity for such contact. The respondent faces this challenge by referring back to her interest in science which she now links with "the medical side of it". The following question again acts a prompt to the respondent to be more specific about her choice and indeed in the first part of her response she checks that this is what is required. The remainder of her answer points out that there must be an element of guesswork or inference in choosing an occupation and in so doing she appears to be cautioning the interviewer to bear this in mind.

The two extracts presented in this section demonstrate how 'realistic stage' discourse can maintained over a number of question-and-answer turns by respondents 'colluding' with the interviewer in its production. In the next section we shall see how some respondents could not manage to sustain this and in effect ran out of reasons and rationalizations.

8.5 Running out of rational ('realistic stage') responses

The answer to the opening question by respondent 1NRS1 was presented in chapter 6 (p.89) as an apparent example of 'realistic stage' discourse. However, by presenting the succeeding question-and-answer turns we can see how, in the face of repeated invitations to repair, the respondent cannot maintain the conversation any further and, in effect, runs out of rationalizations. An further example is also presented below.

1NRS1 (female, 18)

Int: I'll begin by asking you why do you want to enter nursing?

Resp: Well, when I was deciding what I was going to do I thought of all sorts of things, I don't want to sound big-headed but I could have chosen from most things you see. Em, and I felt that I really wanted to work with people. I mean I work on a Saturday in a shop in the (shop location) and I get on with folk, with the public, and em, I just wanted to meet, I felt nursing would give me a chance to meet people and help them as well. Em, I don't know. My mum is an auxilliary nurse, I suppose that kind of influenced me a little bit. She was, she, my parents didn't say do this or do that, I mean I was free to make my own decision. I feel it's an excellent career to get into and especially if you do the degree you're going to stand a better chance, if I wanted to go on and branch out and maybe do administration or lecturing then I would stand a better chance with the degree. And if I wanted to stop and have a family or whatever then it's always something I could go back to...

Int: Okay, so you say you want to work with people, why then not go into some other job where you are working with people?

Resp: I'm not sure, I really think it's the caring aspect, I really - I think I feel I'm sensistive to other people's needs, I can tell when somebody needs help. I don't know, I think that's one of the reasons. It's not - I couldn't handle a business sort of thing where everything is sort of formal, em I prefer a closer sort of, em atmosphere, if you could call it that.

Int: But is there not formality in hospitals where you're under...

Resp: Yeah, I suppose there is, yeah under the charge of other nurses, em sisters and things, I don't know.

Int: I mean it could be argued that in a hospital it is a fairly regimented routine.

Resp: Yeah, it is, yeah but just like you said, when it comes to the crunch of asking people why do they enter it they're kind of lost for words.

1ME8 (male, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: It's what I wanted to do when I started school, the actual course, well the subjects I took at school to go onto engineering cause I think I would like it, to be an engineer.

Int: Was this at the start of secondary school?

Resp: Yes.

Int: That's quite early, what is it that drew you to that area that early?

Resp: Well my big brother took engineering as well and I think him taking it I just wanted to take it as well.

Int: Would you say he influenced you then?

Resp: Yeah, and I was more interested in engineering than english, or accounts or that.

Int: What was it that drew you to mechanical engineering specifically?

Resp: Well, I liked it because that's what I thought I was most interested in.

Int: Why mechanical as opposed to civil or electrical?

Resp: Well I can't do electrical cause I'm colour blind, I was probably going to do that but there's no point if I was colour blind.

Int: Do think there's any particular qualities you need to do mechanical engineering?

Resp: I think you would be better if you were interested in some parts that are (inaud) but if you wanted to do it.

Int: When you say you're interested what is it that appeals to you about mechanical engineering?

Resp: I don't know.

In the interview with respondent 1NRS1 the interviewer picks up on her claim to like work involving interpersonal contact, and challenges her to be more specific about her choice of nursing. The respondent recognizes the question as such and refers to her caring 'disposition' and contrasts this with what she claims is the formal relations of work in the business arena. The interviewer continues by challenging the respondent on the point of formality in nursing. The respondent predicts the end of the interviewer's turn and completes the assertion ("...yeah under the charge of other nurses, em sisters and things..."). The respondent also indicates that

this is problematic for her by tagging her answer with the phrase "I don't know". At this point the interviewer explicity makes the assertion that working in a hospital environment involves formality although this is put in third person terms. The respondent agrees with this assertion and gives up the line of rationalization she has been following. This failure is mitigated by implying that the interviewer has set her an impossible task which would leave anyone "lost for words".

Respondent 1ME8 answers the opening question by claiming that he was interested in doing an engineering course when starting secondary school. He then refers to subjects he took at school although he does not specify them. Over the following three question-and-answer turns it emerges that the respondent's brother had influenced him through taking up engineering although the he is careful not to attribute his choice soley to this influence ("I was more interested in engineering than english or accounts or that"). In the following two turns the interviewer attempts to elicit specific reasons for his choice of mechanical engineering. The respondent's answers do not close the matter because he relies on vague claims to being "interested" in it and only provides a reason for not taking up electrical engineering. That his responses are not regarded as satifactory is demonstrated by the fact that the interviewer's final question in the sequence pursues the same issue. The respondent can go no further at this point ("I don't know") and therefore has run out 'realistic stage', or rational answers.

8.6 'Fantasy stage' responses as functional

It was pointed out in chapter 6 that a number of respondents gave 'fantasy' as well as 'realistic stage' responses. From a developmental perspective this causes something of a problem as it undermines the hypothesis of distinct stages of development in vocational thinking. It might be possible to explain such discrepancies by claiming that they are indicative of 'psuedocrystallization' (see chp.1, p.16). However, an examination of the conversational context in which these responses were given again provides an alternative explanation.

The 'fantasy stage' responses of the mechanical engineering respondents were of a different nature to those of the nursing respondents. In the case of the mechanical engineering respondents these kind of responses were used to refer to what might be regarded as glamorous aspects of the occupation whereas the nursing respondents referred to childhood interests.

4NRS3 (female, 21)

Int: When you say you always wanted to do that, was there any particular reason for that? Was there anyone in your family...

Resp: No, em well I've got a couple of cousins and things that are nurses but not really very many. But I think when you say you're always wanting to be an air hostess, and a teacher, and a nurse, and I just never got away from that....

1ME10 (male, 18)

Int: So you think you may get into management once you finish (Resp: Yeah). And what do you see yourself doing then?

Resp: Well I'm going to try and get a scholarship in the navy and do something like marine engineering.

Int: But I would imagine that when you're in the navy you'd be working with turbines and other machinery like that, yet you say you want to go into management.

Resp: Yeah, a marine engineer, he's in charge of folk who are doing that.

Int: I see.

Resp: I'm the manager of the ship type-of-thing.

1ME6 (male, 17)

Int: You say you want to go into design, what is it that draws you to that area?

Resp: Just always watching motor sport and that, you here about all these designers who design all these grand prix cars and rally cars. It's really been my ambition because I do watch that kind of stuff on TV and I'd like to be involved in that. I've watched it for many years and it's become a hobby as well and I'd like to become more actively involved in it.

The answer given by respondent 4NRS3 is simply another means of establishing a commitment to nursing through reference to a long-standing interest in it (see section 8.3). Respondents 1ME10 and 1ME6 refers to areas of employment, whilst although being out of the ordinary, are characterized in a somewhat glamorous manner in their answers (1ME10: "I'm the manager of the ship type of thing"; 1ME6: "...you hear about all these designers who design all these grand prix cars and rally cars"). It is possible to view these responses as a way of enhancing the status of these occupations. It would appear therefore that these respondents may therefore be attempting to glamourize their intended areas of employment. This interpretation of these responses would then afford an explanation in terms of social identity theory, although as argued in chapter 7 (p.118) it is not neccesary to accept the cognitive basis of the theory. Thus respondents may talk about these occupations in such a manner in order to bolster their own

work identity and maintain a positive self-esteem.

8.7 The deployment and maintenance of 'choice' accounts

The analysis offered in this chapter challenges the notion of stages in the development of vocational thinking. Rather what may develop is the ability to deploy certain forms of 'choice' discourse to meet specific situational and conversational demands. Thus the developmental theories fail to account for the data because they are committed to view that people's responses tells us about their unseen cognitive processes rather than interactive responsiveness. This perspective locates the origins of discourse inside the person and ignores what we have seen to be the crucial social and situational determinants.

The predominantely rational ('realistic stage') answers given by the respondents need not be be thought of as a reflection of their cognitive architecture. As was noted earlier Harré (1983) points out that rational discourse conforms to a cultural expectation. Thus 'rationality' in discourse is socially generated rather than expressing a particular mental organization. In other words the assumption need not be made that rational thought underlies rational discourse. It is the ability to rationalize one's actions and make them appear 'sense-able' which is of key importance. Thus one may speculate that success or failure in maintaining rational ('realistic stage') discourse in, for example, a job selection interview, is of crucial importance in determining the outcome (see chapter 10).

It can be argued that introspectively we appear to have a sense of having made a rational choice of occupation. Yet this may have more to do with 'practising' our occupational choice 'stories' than with some 'inner' mental process. As Vygotsky (1962) would have it, it is not thought that determines language, rather it is the other way around, language determines thought. Through talking rationally about our choices of occupation we convince ourselves that we have made a rational ('realistic') choices.

CHAPTER 9

LOOKING AT GENDER TALK

9.1 Introduction

Psychological theories, particularly those concerned with human development, have come under attack for claiming unisex significance whilst in fact being rooted in male experience (e.g. Gilligan, 1982). Dex (1985) has drawn attention to this kind of sexism in research into occupational choice by noting that much of the work in this field has, until recently, focused exclusively upon the career intentions and decisions of young men. This neglect of women has been particularly prevalent amongst those adopting a developmental perspective. Ginzberg's original study (Ginzberg et al., 1951) was primarily concerned with the development of vocational thinking in adolescent boys, and Super's extended longitudinal study (the 21-year Career Pattern Study) focused entirely upon the career plans and paths of a male sample. Consequently the inter-locking issues of sex-role socialisation, gender identification, and the sexual division of labour are not addressed by the theories derived from these studies.

The empirical work relating to Holland's personality-matching theory includes some major studies with mixed sex samples (e.g., Holland, 1968). Sex differences in the distribution of types have also been reported with males, in general, scoring higher on the realistic, investigative, and enterprising themes, whilst women tend to score higher on the social, artistic, and conventional themes (Gottfredson et al., 1975). Attempts have been made to

eliminate sex bias from interest inventory items in response to this. However, Holland has little to say about the sexual division of labour but has instead attempted to show that his theory has predictive value regardless of sex. This chapter considers the correspondence between the collected interview data and the two main psychological theories and discusses the extent to which gender is a feature of respondents' answers (research question 6).

9.2 Gender and personality categorizations

In our society engineering and nursing tend to attract men and women respectively. This is evidenced by the scarcity of female mechanical engineering students (only two) and male nursing students (only one) in the year groups sampled for this study. Engineering is conventionally characterized as a 'masculine' occupation because it involves working with machines and the application of mathematical and scientific knowledge, whilst nursing is associated with being 'feminine' because it invloves caring for people. Yet despite the segregation of the sexes into these and other sex-typed occupations Holland (1985) explains occupational choice soley in terms of 'personality' differentiation. Gender is written into his personality typology in an unreflective common sense manner. Thus an 'investigative type' includes important elements of what gender-conscious psychologists would describe as 'masculine' characteristics and similarly a 'social type' includes elements associated with 'femininity'. Holland therefore takes gender differentiation for granted as a natural order rather than as an object of investigation requiring explanation. It may therefore be that it is gender rather than

'personality' which predicts the kind of occupations men and women enter.

Other researchers (e.g., Sharpe 1976) have focused upon the link between sex, gender and occupational choice patterns. Sharpe's study presents statements made by adolescent girls concerning the jobs they considered open to them at the time and illustrates the expression of 'femininity' through a persistent focus upon working with people across various types of paid employment (e.g., doctor, journalist, policewoman). As Sharpe notes a concern for people is very positive aspect of 'femininity' and can therefore be regarded as useful way for women to justify their choice of occupations. As we have seen this kind of response was prevalent amongst the responses of the female nursing students in this study (see chapter 6, pp. 75-76).

A consideration of men in traditionally 'women's' occupations and vice versa may provide interesting insights into the organization of gender-relevant occupational choice justifications. The extract below is taken from the interview with the male nursing respondent.

1NRS5 (male, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Basically because I wasn't clever enough to be a doctor. Eh, I just sort of have always been interested in how people work, how to keep them well, mend them, that's about it.

Int: So are you saying nursing is a second best for you?

Resp: Well in a way it is, although again in itself it is a profession, in itself, you know. A doctor has to be even cleverer (sic), you know, and they've got to do a lot of

training, em whereas with nursing there isn't so much training. That's the thing I don't particularly like about nursing, it's not so - I mean I would like to fix people up and a lot of it is geared to em, how they feel, if they're comfortable. I'd rather do something on the clinical side, fixing them up.

Int: When you say you'd prefer the clinical side, can you expand upon that? What do you mean by the clinical side?

Resp: Eh well, you know doctors, eh well, look at something and say well this is what's wrong with, they move, say it's an arm, they move it about and through just what they feel they can decide on what's happened. If the nurse - the doctor will tell the nurse what's going on and what he wants done to it and so the nurse will go and do it, although she doesn't have to, you know. That's what I'd like to do, you know, seeing what's right and what wrong with the person and just doing what the doctor thinks should be done for the person. Em, so the nurse is just sort of - I mean it's important as well but I'd rather do I suppose what you would call diagnosis.

It is difficult to reconcile these responses with Holland's typology. As a nurse this respondent should be a 'social type' yet the justifications provided do not appear to correspond with this prediction. Instead these responses would appear to fit more easily into Holland's 'investigative' type ("I just have always been interested in how people work, how to keep them well, how to mend them...I would like to fix people up...I suppose I'd rather do what you would call diagnosis"). They convey the impression that he views nursing as a less academic route into medical practice and play down caring aspects of the job ("that's the thing I don't particulary like about nursing...a lot of it is geared to em, how they feel, if they're comfortable"). It therefore seems evident that something other than Holland's 'unusual personality type in nursing' is required to explain these responses. If a functional explanation is adopted then these responses can be viewed as a way of retaining a 'masculine' identity in what is traditionally regarded as a 'feminine' occupation. Thus instead of talking about wanting to work with people and help them, as the female

respondents did, his choice of nursing is justified in terms of being concerned with "diagnosis" and "fixing them up".

Consider now the justifications of the two female mechanical engineering students.

1ME1 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Well, it's something I wanted to do for a long time. It was about second year, it was sort of electrical to begin with and mechanical engineering was my second choice and I took that one. Just sort of, em my grandfather was an engineer and just like that I wanted to do something constructive. I didn't want to do a sort of female job, I wanted something more male-dominated.

Int: What do you mean by a female sort of job?

Resp: Well, sort of round my way where I come from females are not engineers, they're sort of teachers or whatever and I wanted to do something different.

Int: Can you put your finger on why you wanted to do something different?

Resp: I don't know, just my sort of attitude to life really. I wanted to do something that I was equal in, not just sort of downgraded.

1ME2 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering?

Resp: Em, I don't know, I just always enjoyed science subjects at school. Physics was always my favourite and I wanted to do something with physics. I thought about the electrical side of it but it was always more difficult and I liked finding out why things worked and why they did such and such a thing. I just wanted to know more about why things worked and why they did it.

..... I did secretarial and everything but I didn't enjoy it. I enjoyed science better, physics mainly.

Int: What was it you disliked about secretarial?

> Resp: It was boring, the same thing everyday, just going in and typing. I mean you didn't find anything out, I mean in science you were always discovering something new. It's just more interesting.
>
> ..... And typing I'd always thought was a ladies thing and I didn't want to do it.

We might have expected that these respondents would cast their choice in more 'feminine' terms (e.g., a 'social' response indicating a preference interpersonal contact in engineering) just as the male nursing respondent appears to have engaged in constructing a more 'masculine' nursing identity. These women are not however concerned to feminize engineering. They explicitly reject conforming to traditional expectations regarding women's occupational choices (1ME1: "I didn't want a female job, I wanted something more male-dominated....females are not engineers, they're teachers or whatever"; 1ME2: "And typing I'd always thought of as a ladies thing and I didn't want to do it"). The first respondent also refers to her choice in terms of a status difference between "female" and "male" types of work ("I wanted to do something that I was equal in, not just sort of downgraded"). Thus it is clear that she regards predominately 'social' type 'feminine' work, such as teaching, as low-status in comparison to engineering, an 'investigative' or 'masculine' occupation. The second respondent is more explicit about the 'investigative' reasons for her choice ("I wanted to do something with physics...I liked finding out why things worked and why they did such and such a thing"). She also contrasts secretarial work which involves "just going in and typing" with science which involves "always discovering something new". Therefore her stress on the 'investigative' aspects of her choice are presented as an alternative to what she regards as a dull routine career doing secretarial work, a traditional 'female'

job.

None of the male respondents spoke of their choice of engineering in terms of a rejection of gender expectations. For these men being 'investigative' is what is expected of them and therefore no explanation need be given. For women, on the other hand, to claim to be 'investigative' runs counter to gender expectations and therefore is seen to require explanation.

We can therefore see that both the male nursing respondent and the two female engineering respondents refer to their choices in 'investigative' or 'masculine' terms. It seems that by doing so they avoid the low-status connotations associated with 'social' or 'feminine' work. Holland misses this point for he would apparently regard such responses as simply indicative of different personality types. Yet they are not equal alternatives and the responses of the first female engineering respondent candidly put this point across. 'Social' occupations in which women work are regarded as low-status and devaluing, to say nothing of how relatively low-paid they are. The 'raised consciousness' of this respondent has led her to reject a low-status future which she sees as prescribed for her because of her sex. Thus we can see that lay accounts of occupational choice involve an awareness of gender considerations whereas Holland's typology is apparently blind to this.

The rejection of traditional 'female' jobs in the clerical and retail sectors was also mentioned by a number of the female nursing respondents who presented their choice of nursing as more varied and interesting than 'shop' or 'office' work. Two examples are

provided below.

> 1NRS2 (female, 18)
>
> Resp: ...I really didn't fancy working in an office cause you'd be sitting there all the time being bored and you wouldn't have much variety in it. And also em, each day would be different if you worked in a hospital unlike the work in an office.
>
> 1NRS8 (female, 19)
>
> Resp: ...I didn't want to be stuck in an office and didn't want to be stuck in a shop or anything cause I've worked in a shop and I know what it's like, it alright doing it part-time but it's not for me...

These respondents present their choice within the context of a narrow range of available options. Nursing is justified in terms of being an 'escape' from other forms of routine 'women's' work. Again Holland's personality-matching theory misses the way in which women perceive themselves to be assigned to routine 'conventional' work and how their choices of occupations are affected by these societal expectations.

9.3 Gender and developmental categorizations

It is evident from the above discussion that what constitutes a 'realistic' occupational choice (in the developmental sense) is different for men and women. Women are severely limited in comparison to men with respect to the range of jobs which they can consider open to them. As Sharpe says

> Girls are not usually frustrated mechanics, engineers, lorry drivers, electricians, pilots, journalists and doctors. Most of them have an inbuilt cataloguing system in which the reasons and dogmas [for not choosing these kind of jobs] come under the section concerning common-sense and the way of the world. (1976, pp. 176-177).

This kind of common sense which Sharpe identified in her study is also manifest in respondents' answers concerning the lack of women in engineering.

1ME1 (female, 17)

Int: Why do you think women aren't going into mechanical engineering?

Resp: Because they probably think it's too heavy, like I did, sort of really heavy, heavy machines.

Int: And why should that put women off going into it?

Resp: I don't know, I can't speak for anybody else really but I thought I'll see what I can do, see if it's heavy. Well it's not heavy just now.

5ME1 (male, 21)

Int: Why do you think there are so few women in mechanical engineering?

Resp: I think it comes down to the old boiler suits and spanners syndrome. I think it's conceived as a very macho profession which is totally unwarranted because I think there's so many jobs you can do in it, and I mean none of them involve heavy lifting or hard physical work. But I think it comes down to this problem of it being conceived as boiler suits and spanners and it's not got the attraction of something like electrical or electronic engineering where you're dealing with computers and you envisage a clean environment, you know, nice offices and all this. When you think of mechanical engineering you usually think of yourself up to your knees in oil, that kind of thing.

1NRS3 (female, 18)

Int: Why do you think there are so few women in mechanical engineering?

Resp: Because it looks a dirty profession and women tend to be cleaner and things and don't like getting their hands dirty. And then again you have to go back to the strength aspect of it as well, women don't generally have as much strength as men.

5ME10 (male, 25)

Int: Why do you think there are so few women in mechanical engineering?

Resp: I think it goes back to social attitudes. Em, it's ignorance as well, engineering a dirty job and women traditionally have been from an early age dressed up in pretty little dresses and put on pedestalls, I mean social attitudes. And also engineering, lots of men, it's a sort of macho thing to do.

These responses appear to be part of, or show an awareness of, a popular ideology in which women are regarded as preferring 'clean' light work as opposed to 'dirty' heavy work. It is therefore viewed as being 'unfeminine' to engage in traditional engineering work which is associated with "boiler suits and spanners". This view persists despite, as Sharpe notes, examples such as nursing where women are engaged in heavy lifting and 'messy' work. The reasons given for the lack of men in nursing commonly identified social pressures likely to be incurred for not conforming to gender expectations. Examples of this type of response are given below.

1ME5 (male, 21)

Int: Why do you think there are so few men going into nursing?

Resp: It's regarded as being feminine, isn't it? I think it all stems from the early years at secondary school when you choose your subjects. I mean when you're thirteen or fourteen, if one of my friends when I was fourteen said I'm going to be a nurse it would be a big joke, a big laugh.

1NRS2 (female, 18)

Int: Why do you think there are so few men in nursing?

Resp: Because they think it'll be too female-orientated, that they'll look a cissy, or that everybody will think that thy're wet if they become a nurse.

5ME6 (male, 21)

Int: Why do you think there are so few men in nursing?

Resp: Well, if I'd said to one of my friends that I was going to be a nurse they'd kind of look at me and say, what, are you bent or something? It's just social pressure.

4NRS9 (female, 21)

Int: Why do you think there are so few men going into nursing?

Resp: Just because of the image of nursing as female, it's not macho for a male to go into nursing. The peer pressure, friends and all that saying it's a cissy thing to do and you shouldn't do it.

It is evident from these responses that men are not thought of as 'masculine' if they enter nursing and are likely to face ridicule and even have their sexuality brought into question. Thus to ignore the effects of gender expectations upon the development of vocational thinking, as both Ginzberg and Super have, is to miss a crucial explanatory factor in people's choice of occupations.

Apart from talking in terms of a restricted range of employment two of the female nursing respondents also mentioned another 'realistic' consideration which did not feature in the responses of any of the male respondents, namely, responsibility for child-rearing.

1NRS1 (female, 18)

Resp: ...And if I wanted to stop and have a family or whatever then it's always something I could go back to...

4NRS2 (female, 22)

Resp: It's a good profession to get into, you can work in later life, you can go back to nursing after having a family without having to sit other courses or being behind. With, say, computers you'd be behind the times if you left it for a few years.

Here the respondents' choice of nursing is presented in terms of being an occupation which can be re-entered relatively easily after child-rearing. Thus looking after children is presented as being a natural consideration to take into account for these women (see Wetherell et al., 1987). It is a taken-for-granted assumption that they might at some time in their lives have to take 'time out' for child-rearing. Again we can see that what counts as being rational ('realistic stage') talk can vary between the sexes.

An inspection of what Ginzberg might categorize as respondents' 'fantasy' replies also reveals differences in gender content. Let us reconsider the following 'fantasy' statements.

> 1NRS3 (female, 18)
>
> ...And I just remember these people flashing about in white uniforms and they were always very very nice. I thought I want to be like that as well, I want to be nice.

> 4NRS3 (female, 21)
>
> ...But I think when you say you're always wanting to be an air hostess, and a teacher, and a nurse, and I just never got away from that...

> 1ME6 (male, 17)
>
> ...you here about all these designers who design these grand prix cars and rally cars. It's really been my ambition because I do watch that kind of stuff on TV and I'd like to be more involved in that.

> 1ME10 (male, 18)
>
> I'm the manager of the ship type-of-thing.

These statements contain very different gender identifications. The first of the two female nursing respondents expresses a desire

to "be nice"; a characteristic associated with 'femininity'. The second places her choice within the context of girls' occupational fantasies which she claims she "never got away from". These statements can be contrasted with the male mechanical engineering respondents' statements. The first of these respondents talks about his choice in terms of motor car racing; an activity associated with 'masculinity'. The second talks about being the "manager of a ship", a reference to being in command which is traditionally associated with 'masculinity'. Again intersubjective role expectations based upon gender differentiation come through in these responses.

9.4 Mixing gender talk

Sharpe (1976) viewed the girls' expressed orientation towards working with people in her study as arising from the way in which women are socialized to see themselves as being dependent for their identity and self-esteem on relationships with others. Gilligan (1982) drawing upon Horner's (1972) work also regards gender differences as intersubjective structures which individuals need to consciously reconstruct in order to acquire gender flexibility. However, whilst this appears to be confirmed in the analysis conducted upon the data so far it is worth noting that Wetherell (1986) cautions us against viewing gender as a static characteristic of persons. It is not simply the case that people are locked into a particular way of speaking depending upon their sex. Men can use 'feminine' talk and vice versa in certain conversational situations. Consider the following extracts.

1NRS10 (female, 19)

Int: So why do you want to go into nursing?

Resp: A good question, em I don't know really, it's just what I've always, well I've not always fancied it but when you do your choice of subjects and that, I've always been interested in medical things and the way things work and things like that. So it just seemed natural really to go into that.

Int: Do you not think that's common to all occupations, that there's a glamourised side to it and that you see only what you want to see?

Resp: Well I know nursing's not glamorous, it's anything but, it's dirty and mucky and you're up to your elbows in all sorts. But it's more about communicating with people, sort of. It's more interesting cause you meet different people all the time. I mean in most jobs you meet people who are working with you and are the same as you, obviously people like office workers, whereas in nursing you're working with other nurses but also a whole wide range of different patients from different backgrounds and things like that so you're not just seeing one type of person all the time and I think that's quite good.

1NRS5 (male, 17)

Int: Do you think there's any important qualities you have to have to be a nurse?

Resp: Em well, basically you've got to sort of want to look after people. Em, that's the basic quality. Eh, just really sort of a good sense of humour which is very important. Em, you've got to be tolerant of things, you know.

In the first extract respondent 1NRS10 justifies her choice of nursing in terms of an interest in "medical things and the way things work"; an apparently 'investigative' (or 'masculine') identification. In the second extract she is responding to the interviewer's assertion that she is looking for an element of glamour in her work. In her reply she begins by countering this assertion by pointing out the "dirty and mucky" side to the job. In the remainder of her answer she talks about the variety of work in nursing in terms of working with people. The emphasis on working with people here, as noted previoulsy, is associated with

'femininity'. Thus across her answers there is a mix of gender-relevant talk which serves to meet the demands of the interviewer's questions.

We have already seen earlier in this chapter how respondent 1NRS5 managed to construct a 'masculine' identity. However, in the extract above, instead of taking about an interest in investigating patients' medical problems he states that nursing requires a desire to "look after people". This is now in keeping with the traditional 'social' (or 'feminine') view of nursing. Why has this arisen? One answer is that he appear to have drawn upon the 'standard membership category account' of nursing because he was specifically asked about the qualities thought to be required for the job in general. His answer is therefore framed in terms of the characteristics conventionally associated with the membership category 'nurse', which of course includes the 'feminine' characteristic of caring. Again this example serves to show that respondents are able, on certain occasions, to draw upon other forms of gender-relevant talk. Nevertheless, the prevalence of 'social' accounts given by the the female nursing respondents and 'investigative' or 'realistic' accounts given by the mechanical engineering respondents, together with their common sense views about the sex-typed nature of these occupations, suggests that gender identifications do, in large measure, explain occupational choice justifications. Thus despite the apparent flexibility in some respondents' gender constructions the data supports the view that intersubjective gender considerations are major determinants of occupational choice.

CHAPTER 10

LOOKING AT COURSE SELECTION INTERVIEWS

10.1 Introduction

An analysis of a small number of course selection interviews was undertaken as a means of checking on the ecological validity of the research interview findings discussed in the previous chapters (research question 8). This subsidiary examination of 'real life' interview data permitted the study of interviewers' responses to certain types of answer by looking at instances of (interviewer) other-initated repair and the change-over of question topics. In other words, the methods by which interviewers control the structure of the conversations was used as a way into developing an understanding of the kind of responses looked for.

10.2 The mechanical engineering and nursing interviews: Interviewing for different purposes

Only the four nursing interviews were analyzed in depth for the purposes of this chapter. Two mechanical engineering interviews were also tape-recorded but were not used because they did not involve the same variety and depth of questioning as the nursing selection interviews. Their function appeared to be more directed towards providing information about the mechanical engineering course and were therefore not comparable to the research interests of the study. The interviews conducted with nursing applicants, on the other hand, were undertaken in order to select applicants for the offer of places on the course. These applicants faced a panel interview (three interviewers) in which each interviewer covered a distinct set of questions based on the following themes: (1) family

background, interests and hobbies, (2) the choice of nursing as a career, and (3) school career and qualifications.

It is tempting to regard the differences in these interviews as reflecting common sense views concerning the qualities and abilities required for these occupations (see chapter 7). An ability in school subjects related to engineering may be regarded as being more important than applicants' personal qualities, whereas in nursing personal qualities may be regarded as being just as, or even more important than possession of the necessary entrance qualifications. However, an alternative explanation is provided by the courses' applications to places ratios. These were as follows for entry in session 1988/89: 48 1st choice mechanical engineering applicants for 30 places (approx. 1.5:1) and 212 1st choice nursing applicants for 27 places (approx. 8:1). The nursing course therefore has many more applicants apply than there are places available and it would appear that the rigorous selection interviewing programme serves as a means of discriminating between applicants. The mechanical engineering course has in comparison far less applications and therefore it would appear that the selection process here involves searching for those applicants who are adequately qualified rather than the best.

10.3 Using the 'standard membership category account'

One of the main findings discussed in chapter 7 was the apparent preference of the research interviewer for 'standard membership category accounts' as rationales for occupational choices. This preference is also evident in the course selection interviews.

Consider the two examples below.

Nursing applicant 1 (female)

Int: With your qualifications I'm sure you are aware that there are quite a few professions open to you. What is so attractive about nursing?

Appl: I wanted a job working with people and an interesting, satisfying and rewarding job and where there's variety. I didn't just want a nine to five office job.

Int: You can get this from many other jobs, working with people in hotels, social work or medicine. Why is nursing so attractive to you?

Appl: I feel I'm quite a caring person and I feel I could care and cope with people who are ill or elderly because I help to look after my grandmother, she's seventy and in a geriatric ward and I go down and feed her and that about twice a week.

Int: When you go down to see your grandmother are you encouraged to help?

Nursing applicant 2 (female)

Int: What brings you to be interested in nursing?

Appl: I've always been interested in nursing, it's always been something that I would like to have done from an early age.

Int: Why what started it?

Appl: Just meeting people, I enjoy that, and em, helping people as best as I can. Just getting into an environment of nursing, you know, helping people and being sociable and things like that. I think just being able to talk to people when they need someone to talk to.

Int: Have you been a patient, or have you visited, or have you got relatives who are nurses?

The first applicant begins with the "I want to work with people" response commonly used by young women in justifying their occupational choices. She then mentions her preference for a job with variety or, what Holland would call the 'artistic' element of the nurse subtype. However, the interviewer is not completely satisfied with this response (it does not show clear evidence of

being the nursing 'type') and gives examples of other occupations which involve working with people and which could be said to be satisfying. An invitation to repair is subsequently made by re-directing the initial question. The applicant responds to this cue by talking about her caring side and relates this to personal experience. In this way she establishes her credentials as the nursing 'type' and the interviewer is apparently satisfied with this response as is evidenced by the shift in questioning.

Applicant 2 responds to the question about her choice of nursing with the "I've always wanted to be a nurse" response which was identified in chapter 8 as a standard claim to a genuine and long-standing interest in nursing. The interviewer then seeks to establish the basis of the applicant's claim ("Why what started it?"). At this point the applicant draws upon the 'standard membership category account' ("...I enjoy helping people....being able to talk to people when they need someone to talk to") and the interviewer moves onto another question topic.

These examples demonstrate that the 'standard membership category account' prompts a topic change whereas other responses invite further probing. If the interviewer's initial question on occupational choice is not met with such a response then an attempt is made to elicit it through invitations to repair, either by re-directing the question or by picking up on an aspect of the applicant's answer.

10.4 Looking for rational ('realistic stage') responses

In chapter 8 we saw that 'realistic' questions tend elicit 'realistic' answers and that this 'collusion' between interviewer and respondent provided an overall impression of rational choice across a sequence of question-and-answer turns. This is also apparent in the course selection interviews. Nursing applicants were asked a series of questions about the way in which they obtained information about the job, the assumption being that such information was taken into account in a rational decision-making process. An example of this line of questioning is presented below.

Nursing applicant 1 (female)

Int: How did you find out about nursing?

Appl: Well my aunt is a health visitor and she's told me a lot about nursing. And her daughter and my uncle's daughter are nurses so there's quite a lot of connections with nurses in the family.

Int: And you've talked with them at length about nursing?

Appl: Yes.

Int: Any friends who are studying for a course like this one or the straightforward RGN course?

Appl: No. I know of a girl who was in my class at school and she's going to (name of hospital) and becoming qualified through the hospital. But at the moment she's working in a cancer hospital just being an orderly and she seems to enjoy it, she says it's really good, but I don't know her that well.

Int: Have you read anything about nursing?

Appl: I read when I was young, is it Sue Barton or something? She was a nurse, I liked that when I was young but after that no.

Int: Have you read textbooks on nursing?

Appl: No, but I've read leaflets from the courses and things.

Int: Besides going to visit your gran, have you worked in a hospital or visited in any other capacity?

Appl: Well I've only visited like if a relative has been in hospital. My sister had her appendix out three years ago so I was up when she had an appendix out. But apart from that I wrote away for a summer job in a hospital working as anything but they wrote back saying they had no vaccanies. But since then I've heard that maternity hospitals take people on so I've written away but I've not heard anything yet but hopefully I'll get a job.

Int: Nursing is a very large field and you've talked about health visiting, midwifery and nursing the physically ill. Where do you think your interests would lie?

The applicant responds to the initial question on how she found out about nursing by referring to discussions with nursing relatives, stressing the point that there is a "lot of connections with nurses" in her family. Although she does not explicity state that she has been informed by these other family members she invites this inference. Indeed the interviewer's next question is a form of understanding-check on this point ("And you've talked with them at length") but the applicant's simple "yes" reply invites further probing. The interviewer's next question on whether or not the applciant has any friends who are on a nursing course appears to indicate that further evidence of an informed choice is being sought. The applicant's reply is less than convincing for she only refers to someone from her class at school who is working in a hospital and who "seems to enjoy it". The interviewer therefore continues pursuing the informed or 'realistic' nature of the applicant's choice but switches from asking about information obtained from family members and friends to information gained from reading about nursing. The applicant responds by mentioning an author she had read when she was younger but the following

question, a form of other-initiated repair, makes it clear that it is factual knowledge gained from textbooks that is being enquired about and the applicant quickly corrects her 'mistake' by mentioning that she has read course leaflets. Although not what was directly being enquired about (i.e., textbooks), they nevertheless constitute a source of factual information relevant to the impression of an informed choice having been made.

The interviewer still pursues the extent of the informed nature of the applicant's choice by enquiring about information and impressions gained from personal experience of working or visiting in a hospital. In her answer the applicant mentions that she has been a visitor in a hospital but appears to regard this as less siginicant that the fact that she had applied to work in a hospital thereby demonstrating evidence of her commitment to gain some first-hand experience of a hospital environment. By doing so she manages to create the impression that such experience is a part of the decision-making process in choosing a career. It is at this point that the applicant appears to have amassed enough 'realistic' choice vocabulary to satisfy the interviewer who initiates a new question topic.

From the above analysis we can see how the applicant is drawn into a process of 'collusion' with the interviewer in order to construct the required picture of a 'realistic' choice. The interviewer is perpetually inviting the applicant to produce the 'right' answers and in this instance the applicant is able to oblige over a series of turns. Obviously questionnaires, or for that matter application forms, cannot reveal applicants' skill in

such interactive 'collusion'. In the following sequence the applicant fails to 'collude' with the interviewer's invitations and one feels that she may well be judged negatively as a result.

Nursing applicant 4 (female)

Int: Is nursing something you've thought about recently or have you been thinking about it for some time?

Appl: Well I thought about it for a long time and then I went off the idea, but I've come back to it again.

Int: Is there anything that, when you say you've just come back to it, is there anything that brought on this?

Appl: We had a week's work experience in a bank but I really didn't enjoy it, I preferred a job where I could put something into society.

Int: Mind you, you could put a lot into society, say as a teacher, or a shop assistant, or whatever. So what do you think that nursing has to offer you that these other jobs don't?

Appl: Caring for people, I don't know, it's something that appeals to me.

Int: You could be a carer as a physiotherapist or an occupational therapist, so why has nursing got the edge?

Appl: I haven't really thought about other specialisations, it's just that nursing appeals to me.

Int: Is there any aspect of nursing you don't find appealing?

This applicant is placed in a position where she 'runs out of realism'. This kind of conversational rut was encountered in Chapter 8 and arose when some respondents could no longer cope with repeated invitations to repair within particular conversational sequences. In the above extract the applicant answers the opening question by stating that she was in the position of having "come back" to nursing as a career choice. Of course such a response begs the question as to what had brought about this reconsideration and the interviewer subsequently seeks information on this point.

The applicant replies that working in a bank did not allow her to "put something into society". The interviewer then indicates that her response does not justify her choice of nursing in particular and repeats the question. Now the applicant begins to get into difficulties. Her reply is without conviction and offers no 'realistic' background to her decision ("Caring for people, I don't know, it's something that appeals to me"). Consequently the interviewer feels obliged to test the extent to which the applicant has made an informed choice by asking her to distinguish her choice of nursing from other health care occupations. The applicant replies by admitting to not having considered her choice in these terms and is left in the position where she can only repeat her claim that she finds nursing appealing. The interviewer having failed to elicit a 'realistic' justification, gives up the line of questioning and changes the direction of questioning.

In the context of nursing a 'realistic' choice might also be said to involve an awareness of what is involved in the job, particularly those aspects which would generally be regarded as unpleasant. We can see how the interviewer appears to seek this kind of response through contrasting the following two extracts.

Nursing applicant 3 (female)

Int: What do you think you'd be doing to begin with in the early days of your nursing career?

Appl: Just doing the basics, asking people if they need help to go to the lavatory, that sort of thing.

Int: Any other jobs?

Appl: Assistance with feeding or walking.

Int: We call that the basics but to a patient it's the most important thing in their lives at the time, yes that's the

kind of thing. How do you think you'll manage with patients who are actively sick or have bad pressure sores?

Appl: Well, actually my aunt's mother was like that, you know, unable to go to the toilet so I don't think I'd have any problems with that cause I've had experience.

Int: How do you deal with people - you work in a bar so you're going to come across people who are not the best?

Nursing applicant 1 (female)

Int: What do you think you'd be doing as a student on a medical ward? What sort of tasks do you think you'd be doing for the patients?

Appl: You'd be caring for them.

Int: In what way?

Appl: Well talking to them and making sure they are clean and just generally looking after them.

Int: Could you be more specific about caring and looking after?

Appl: I suppose you'd do like wounds, you know bandaging and that but I've never actually been in a ward.

Int: What do nurses do on a medical ward for instance?

Appl: Care I would say, care is the most important thing.

Int: What would you want done to you if you were ill?

Appl: I'd want to be comfortable and out of pain.

Int: What does the nurse do for people who are ill?

Appl: Give them injections and keep them clean and comfortable.

Int: How about feeding and bathing patients, and helping them do things they can't do for themselves. You're cousins must have told you about some of the unsavoury tasks.

Appl: Yes, bed pans and wiping up sickness but I think with experience you'd be able to cope with it fairly well.

Int: How about working with people, maybe children, who are terminally ill and dying?

Resp: I think that would be very sad but there is a happy medium between being caring and detached and I think with experience you'd come to terms with it. I saw a thing on television about Great Ormond Street Hospital and a nurse was saying that her way of looking at it was that heaven would be

a terrible place without children so I think you have to have a positive attitude towards them, I think, making their last few months, or days, or whatever, better than they would be elsewhere.

Int: Yes, em well that's all thank you.

In the first extract the applicant responds to the interviewer's intial question by talking about the "basics" and gives the example of helping people go to the lavatory. The interviewer asks for further examples of what constitutes this sort of work and the applicant obliges ("Assitance with feeding or walking"). The interviewer then goes on to point out the importance of these 'basics' from the patient's point of view and asks the applicant how she think she would cope with this sort of work. The applicant is able to draw upon personal experience and this apparently satisfies the interviewer who moves onto another topic.

The second extract shows how difficulties can arise for an applicant if the 'basics' are not specified and how the interviewer pursues such a response. The applicant's responses are couched in general terms ("Caring for patients..."generally just looking after them"... etc.) and the interviewer persistently tries to elicit the specific tasks involved ("In what way"?...Could you be more specific about the caring and looking after"?..."What do nurses do on a medical ward for instance"?..."What would you want done for you if you were ill?"... etc.). In the end, however, the interviewer has to provide the desired reply (How about feeding and bathing patients?"). The applicant is aware of these tasks for she responds to the interviewers assertion that her cousins must have told her about this "unsavoury" work by mentioning bed pans and cleaning up "sickness". The interviewer still maintains the line

of questioning by asking about the applicant's ability to cope with the terminally ill. Her response, in which she talks about her concern for the patient whilst maintaining a professional role distance, appears to satisfy the interviewer who subsequently indicates that he has no further questions.

It therefore seems that the more satisfactory response is to specify what is referred to as the 'basics' when asked about nursing practice. By 'colluding' with the interviewer to construct the required answer the applicant plays the 'interview game' and helps to produce the appearance of a relatively smooth, well-meshed interview. One might speculate that success in this might result in a more favourable appraisal.

10.5 What interviewers look for

We have seen that there are certain responses which interviewers seem to find more acceptable than others. Responses which appear to be regarded as satisfactory lead to a change in the question topic, those which appear to be regarded as unsatisfactory lead to a line of questioning which attempts to elicit the apparently satisfactory response by inviting 'collusion'. Applicants would therefore be well-advised to give the 'standard membership category account' and to specify sources of information which have helped them understand the basis of nursing practice, thereby giving the impression of rational (or 'realistic') decsion-making.

A general point emphasized by the analysis, namely, the interviewer's response to respondents' answers, is a crucial

element in conversational development, a point which Bowers (1988) makes in his review essay of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology*. He is critical of the way in which the interviewer's part in what respondents say is largely neglected in their analyses. However, the interviewee's response may frequently be an attempt to provide the interviewer with what is thought to be the desired response, that is, an attempt to negotiate the appropriate reply.

The work here would predict that certain 'hidden agendas' underlying selection interviews could be identified by presenting interviewers with model responses to standard selection interview questions and asking them to rate the performance of the interviewee. It would also be useful to play back recordings of interviews conducted by a number of interviewers and ask them to indicate those responses which they regarded as being satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A more bold approach, of questionable ethics, would be to train stooge 'applicants' (à la Rosenhan, 1973) to give certain types of response in selection interviews, the efficacy of which could be tested in terms of whether or not they were offered places or jobs.

10.6 A word on fillers

Nursing applicants were often asked questions which did not appear to have any bearing upon the selection process. Two types of question could be distinguished. First those which were phrased in such a way so as to force 'collusion' and which therfore require little skill on the part of the interviewee. Examples of this kind

of question are:

> What do your parents feel about you applying to do nursing?
>
> Are you able to lay your interests aside and discipline yourself?
>
> Do you feel ready to leave home?
>
> Have you given any thought to working shifts?

The second type of question could be said to be those which 'fish' for background information from the applicant which can then be used as the basis of further questions if something of relevance is mentioned (e.g., a family member in the occupation). Examples of this sort of question are given below.

> Are you an only child or do you have a brother or sister?
>
> What do you like to do with yourself in your spare time?
>
> Are there any of your interests you would want to pursue if you come here?

These sorts of question would appear to serve the function of allowing the interviewer to use his or her turn to provide the appearance of a smooth, meshed interview but are generally of little use, unless as in the case of 'fishing' questions, the interviewee mentions something of relevance which triggers another question for the interviewer.

CHAPTER 11

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a summary of the findings and draws conclusions. Advice to interviewees on the kinds of responses likely to contribute to a successful interview as well as wider implications are considered.

11.2 Summary of the main findings

The aim of this investigation was to test the utility of two psychological frameworks which have been used to conceptualise occupational choice, namely, the personality-matching (Holland, 1985) and developmental (Ginzberg et al., 1951) theories, in a detailed analysis of lay accounts of vocational course choice. This necessitated an approach to data collection and analysis which would allow close examination of the production of choice accounts in conversation. Garfinkel's (1967) proposal that the conditions which define a decision are not constructed until after the outcome provided a useful perspective on collected course choice accounts. A discourse analysis approach was adopted in which the functional nature of language, as achieving interactive purposes, was stressed (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Use was also made of the conversation analytic technique of focusing on conversational turn-taking in order to examine the interdependent nature of the interview question-and-answer turns (e.g., Sacks, 1972).

Forty undergraduate students following the BSc courses in mechanical engineering and nursing at Dundee Institute of Technology were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format. If, as Holland proposes, there are distinct occupational personality types then these should be evident in these students' accounts of their occupational/course choices. Thus instances of responses revealing Holland's personality types for mechanical engineering (realistic, investigative, enterprising) and nursing (social, investigative, artistic) were looked for in the collected course choice accounts. Similarly if, as Ginzberg proposes, there are distinct stages of vocational development then it would be expected that respondents of this age would talk in 'realistic stage' terms about their choices. Instances of such stage-denoting talk were also documented.

The data could not be successfully categorized in terms of Holland's typological predictions. Variability in the predicted 'personality pattern' for mechanical engineering respondents and within-interview contradictions made the categorization of such a personality type impossible. Nursing respondents did appear to correspond to Holland's 'social' type. However, differences in the characterization of general nursing emerged between the first year students and the final year psychiatric nursing students. The first year students spoke of general nursing as an occupation affording variety of work, as would be predicted according to Holland's 'artistic' element in the nurse subtype. However, the final year students specializing in psychiatric nursing spoke of general nursing as routine and task-orientated, a view which undermines the predicted 'artistic' aspect of the job.

These difficulties emphasized the problems of extracting career choice language from its 'natural' conversational context. Re-contextualising the analysis allows recognition of the conversational accomplishments, or functions, of respondent's answers. This involved examining the way in which responses were embedded within particular question-and-answer sequences. Sack's (1972, 1974) notion of membership categorizations was employed to gain an understanding of the broad differences in accounts between the two vocational groups. Respondents from both courses were found to draw upon an intersubjective knowledge of the characteristics associated with members of their intended occupations (the 'standard membership category account'). This type of account was found to be more readily accepted by the research interviewer than a 'family influence account'. It was proposed that the former type of account serves to establish a respondent's occupational suitability by demonstrating a correspondence to the 'personality stereotype' whereas someone who claims to have been influenced by others leaves this uncertain.

It was argued that the psychiatric nursing respondents' construction of general nursing as routine and task-orientated enabled them to convey the view that their chosen specialism is more patient-centred. Such a comparison therefore serves to maintain a positive work identity. Finally, 'grievance discourse' in which some respondents downgraded their chosen occupation was viewed as a useful 'strategic response' (van Knippenberg 1984; van Knippenberg and van Oers, 1984) in making a case for a higher status position. Both these conversational strategies were seen to involve the kind of identity-enhancement work predicted by social

identity theory (e.g. Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1982).

In applying Ginzberg's notion of a 'realistic stage' of vocational development several kinds of within-interview categorzation conflict occurred. This included instances where respondents appeared to contradict their earlier claims of making informed choices, as well as the appearance of what Ginzberg might categorize as 'fantasy' responses in otherwise 'realistic' respondents. This undermined the notion of such talk representing distinct stages of cognitive development. By focusing on the interactive nature of the interviews it became evident that 'realistic' responses were made in reply to questions which implicity assumed rational decision-making. The maintenance of rational ('realistic stage') accounts was found to operate through respondents 'colluding' with the interviewer so as to provide answers which confirmed the 'realistic' demands implicit in the questions they were asked. Some respondents were found to be less adept at this as others and ran out of rational ('realistic stage') responses. It was argued that the function of 'fantasy' responses given by the mechanical engineering respondents appeared to be to glamourize their occupation and so could be regarded as a useful means of contributing to a positive work identity.

Interview responses were also examined with respect to their gender content. It was found that both the male nursing respondent and the two female mechanical engineering respondents cast their choices in what Holland would apparently refer to as 'investigative' terms. This 'investigative' characterization corresponds closely to a common sense aspect of 'masculinity', that

is, an interest in science or problem-solving. It was argued such masculine characteristics have higher status which explains why the students rationalized their choices in these terms. The female mechanical engineering respondents cast their choice in terms of a rejection of traditional 'female' work such as shop or office work, or what Holland would categorize as 'social' or 'conventional' occupations. None of the male engineering respondents spoke of their choice of engineering in these terms because for them the choice of what Holland would call 'realistic' or 'investigative' work fits in with cultural expectations concerning appropriate 'masculine' work. It was also found that what Ginzberg would refer to as 'realistic stage' vocational thinking was goverened by considerations of gender-appropriate work. For example, respondents were aware that men proposing to enter nursing would be thought of as effeminate and could even have their sexual orientation questioned, and that engineering was not a gender-appropriate occupation for women because it involves 'heavy' and 'dirty' work. Many of the female nursing students spoke of a limited range of jobs which they had considered, mainly traditional 'women's' jobs such as shop or office work. The gendered content of the students responses were also part of what Ginzberg would refer to as 'fantasy' statements. Thus mechanical engineering students who gave these kind of statements would refer to, for example, motor car racing or being in charge of a ship, both 'masculine' images, whereas one nursing respondent in particular, spoke of taking up nursing in order to be "nice", a 'feminine' image.

Finally, an examination of a small number of nursing course

selection interviews provided some support for the ecological validity of the earlier findings. It was found that interviewers appeared to find the 'standard membership category account' a more satisfactory form of response as evidenced by subsequent changes in question topic after such accounts were given. The power of the interviewer in directing the conversation for the purpose of obtaining rational ('realistic') responses was also examined. Interviewers were seen to invite applicants' 'collusion' in constructing an account of the day-to-day activities involved in nursing and the problems encountered, but which nevertheless shows the applicant as being committed to this sort of work.

11.3 Conclusions

It was noted in Chapter 2 that a fundamental assumption underlying the psychological approaches is that what respondents say, whether in the form of psychometric test responses (the mainstay of the personality-matching approach) or interview responses (the mainstay of the developmental approach) can be used as the basis for respectively categorizing personality types and levels of vocational maturity. We have seen, however, that theories founded upon these approaches do not stand the test of a detailed examination of how people actually account for their choices in conversation. So long as the proponents of these theories remain committed to obtaining 'objective', decontextualized categorizations and fail to acknowledge the social purposes to which responses are directed, their results will be at least partially artifactual or, at worst, a collection of 'red herrings'.

This study has, however, offered more than just a critique of the two main psychological theories of occupational choice. An alternative and more fruitful approach to the study of occupational choice accounts has been demonstrated; one which examines the influence of the interactive context on the way respondents construct their answers. Instead of treating responses as revealing something about respondents' 'personalities' or the extent of their capacities for 'realistic' decision-making it has been proposed that they be looked upon as the construction of, to use Garfinkel's term once more, 'sense-able' accounts. This perspective enables an examination of the functions respondents' answers serve. It also allows the researcher to study the whole conversational pattern of the data and not just those parts which can be extracted and categorized according to pre-given theoretical frameworks.

Some advice for interviewees on bringing off successful occupational choice accounts can be distilled from the findings. In general, interviewees should establish early on in an interview their suitability for their chosen occupations in terms of the 'standard membership category account'. They should also establish a rational basis for their choices in terms of their own decision-making capacities and their awareness of the 'realities' of their intended jobs. It would be important for interviewees to learn how to gauge what kind of responses are being sought in this context and by playing the 'game' so as to 'collude' with the interviewer in constructing 'realistic' accounts. The linguistic repertoires which interviewees have access to are therefore a key consideration in the production of a convincing account. This point will be developed later with respect to careers guidance.

If one applies this specifically to mechanical engineering and nursing then the following advice can be given. To bring off a successful account for the choice of mechanical engineering interviewees should preferably attempt to establish their interest in working with machines through referring to any relevant experience. They should declare their interest and/or ability in maths and physics at school, and be able to point to the diversity of the job by stating, for example, that it can range from working with turbines to the field of robotics (an indication of a preference for a specialist area might be useful here in establishing a knowledge of the field). Nursing interviewees should highlight their interest in working with people and specifically in looking after them and caring for them. They should preferably point to a long-standing interest in nursing, possibly by claiming a childhood ambition, but should be able to provide evidence of having made a considered choice by specifying other careers entertained. They should be able to talk about the 'realities' of the job, that is, being able to aid patients to do things while incapacitated such a bathing and toileting. Finally, should salary be mentioned, interviewees would be advised to play down the importance of financial rewards in favour of 'job satisfaction'.

Certain responses and interactional skills might be transferable to other non-interview contexts, for example justifying one's choice to one's friends and maintaining appropriate work-related identities. Other conversational strategies were also noted, for example, as used by the psychiatric

nursing students in justifying their choice by claiming that general nursing is routine and task-orientated in order to enhance the status of their chosen specialism. We also saw how a case can be made for higher renumeration in nursing and higher status in engineering through 'grievance discourse'.

11.4 Implications

This dissertation can be thought of as advancing the case which Potter and Wetherell (1987) make for psychologists to take note of the discourse anlalytic position. They point out that personality trait or 'honest soul' discourse is one particular kind of talk which we use to refer to ourselves. 'Role theory' or 'humanistic character types' could also be drawn upon depending on the interactive circumstances and what the speaker is trying to accomplish. It has been shown in this study how respondents 'honset soul' (or 'personality-expressive') talk is useful in establishing their suitability for their chosen occupations. This view akin to the social constructionist approach (e.g., Gergen, 1985) to discourses of the self and appears to be a more theoretically sound and empirically fruitful approach than a trait approach to understanding career choice.

As regards developmental psychology recent years have seen the questioning of the notion of identifiable stages of cognitive development. For example Harré (1983) draws upon a Vygotskian view of the role of language in child development and argues that it is the acquistion of the principles of talk which give the appearance of cognitive development. As he says it may be that the whole

notion of staged cognitive development is nothing more than a cultural artifact due to changing societal expectations placed upon young people in 'growing up'. In chapter 8 we saw how what Ginzberg would categorize as 'realistic stage' and 'fantasy stage' statements could be given by respondents within the same interview. It was also argued that if such development occurs it takes the form of learning cultural expectations with respect to self-related rational discourse, that is, learning discourse styles. Perhaps a study of how children learn to talk about the world of work would reveal in greater detail how they progress in terms of 'work-choice discourse mastery'.

The present study has implications beyond the level of academic debate. As was noted in chapter 1 the personality-matching and developmental approaches to occupational choice have had an important influence on careers guidance. Guidance based on the 'appropriate-personality' view attempts to match individual attributes to what are regarded as appropriate occupations. This type of guidance usually operates with clients who are faced with imminent career decisions. The techniques used can vary but there is generally a reliance upon psychometric measurements. Recent years have also seen the development and increasing use of computerized matching systems such as GRADSCOPE in higher education (see Ballantine, 1980). The developmental approach to guidance is more long term and is aimed at facilitating the hypothesized developmental stages of 'vocational maturity'. Much emphasis is placed upon the notion of careers education and counselling clients through interviews in order to help them towards 'realistic stage' decision-making.

Roberts (1975) has argued that the developmental theory of occupational choice has been taken up so readily by the careers guidance services in Britain because it operates as a professional ideology legitimating its existence and activities. Prior to the adoption of this approach British careers guidance was largely concerned with placing individuals in jobs, and the occupational status of the careers adviser was certainly not that of a professional. The increasing recognition of developmental theory has meant that careers guidance is now based on 'scientific' principles implying long-term intervention with trained counsellors who are skilled in non-directive interview techniques. Hence careers advisers now claim professional status. The personality-matching approach, although not implying an extended programme of intervention, sustains the traditional role of the careers adviser as selecting 'appropriate' occupations. Thus to criticize these theories is to call into question much of the current work of the careers guidance services and to challenge the purpose of their interventions.

It would appear that the faith which careers guidance practitioners place in the psychological approaches to occupational choice is misplaced and that greater attention should be given to career-selection preparation. This would involve a shift away from advising clients about what jobs they are suited to or how they can improve their occupational decision-making abilities to equipping them with the conversational skills required for employment interviews. A social skills approach to career preparation, focusing upon the negotiation of selection techniques, would also

have the advantage of recognizing the agency (rather than the 'personality' or 'maturational' limitations) of candidates. Clues as to the kinds of skills which could be practised can be found in analysis conducted on the selection interviews examined in the previous chapter. These kinds of responses could be practised in a role-play situation and audio and video feedback techniques could be used to confront clients with their shortcomings. However, before this kind of counselling could proceed a more detailed analysis of the kinds of responses interviewers are looking for requires to be carried out.

It is important to note that a fundamental shift in the ideology of guidance is being proposed here. It can be argued that the present psychologizing of careers guidance has the effect of making it an agency of social control. As Henriques et al. (1984) argue, psychology through its "technology of the social" plays a part in the social reproduction of modern society. The focus on the individual's personality characteristics or his/her development towards rational vocational thinking contributes to the belief that occupational choice is about fitting people into the existing occupational structure (e.g., women into so-called 'social' occupations). The personality-matching approach also preserves the notion of a meritocracy through promoting the view that only certain 'types' of people are suitable for certain kinds of jobs. The developmental view of helping people towards 'realistic stage' vocational thinking is based on the assumption that the 'realities' of the existing occupational structure should feature in the decision-making process. Thus what is socially created is reified as a natural 'reality', part of the taken-for-granted world. In

fact the theories, measuring devices and counselling procedures are themsleves crucial aspects of the ongoing generation and maintenance of this so-called 'reality'.

The approach being proposed rests upon quite different ideological foundations. Instead of operating as an agency of social control it would inevitably prompt social change by encouraging people to think of developing themselves to pass selection procedures, that is, to seek to change their social situation. Instead of careers advisers acting as 'gatekeepers' to the world of work through the practice of person-to-job matching, they would advise clients on how to prepare themselves for the jobs they wish to enter. This would involve assisting clients in the 'code-breaking' required to understand what they need to say and the 'appropriate' qualifications they need to 'get in'. This approach conflicts with the stable meritocratic view of work-entry and shifts attention to the operation of social practice both at the practical and expressive levels which underpin entry codes/barriers (e.g., those practices which lead to sex-typed occupations). Thus the 'naturalness' of work positions and achievements is inherently called into question.

At present careers guidance appears to operate according to a Platonic political philosophy. Plato (1974) in *The Republic* argued that each citizen has different natural aptitudes which are appropriate for some jobs and not others. This is, of course, the basis of Holland's personality-matching approach. Plato coupled this view with his 'Foundation Myth' in which he used a metaphor based on the value attached to different metals as the basis for

his meritocratic utopia. Hence he argued that some are born with gold in them, some silver, and some with iron or bronze. Plato viewed these 'natural' differences as the basis for social and occupational divisions within a society. This view of the occupational structure is akin to the way in which careers guidance practioners operate. People are thought to have differerent work-related aptitudes which need to be channeled in 'appropriate' directions. Hence there is a common belief that people get the kind of jobs they do because of their abilities or personalities.

The sugessted role shift for careers advisers would inevitably highlight Plato's conception as a political and psychological myth. If interviewees become skillful in 'talking their way into jobs' then it is clear that not everyone will be able to enter the job of their choice. This kind of practice would therefore threaten assumptions upon which the present occupational structure rests. Whether or not careers guidance practitioners can be persuaded to adopt such a radically different role remains to be seen. In the meantime the findings of this study make a case for re-appraising the reliance of careers guidance upon current psychological theories of occupational choice and for challenging a key assumption inherent in these approaches, namely, that spoken or written responses can be used to understand psychological structures or processes. Such a view denies the agency of the respondent in the production of what counts as data. Psychologists therefore need to move in the direction of examining the effects of the interactive context on the subject of their investigations.

NOTES

1 (Chp.1, p.1) The term 'careers guidance' has been used to refer to the both the work of 'advisers' and 'counsellors' without drawing a distinction between the two.

2 (Chp.1, p.8) Current version of the SDS incorporating the VPI - 1985, Psychological Assessment Resources Inc. (PAR)

3 (Chp.4, p.60) The term 'respondent' was adopted because of the interview context; students were responding to the interviewer's questions. In other contexts the term 'participant' might be more apposite.

4 (Chp.4, p.61) By 'conversational functions' I mean interactional accomplishments achieved through responses as well as the part they play in regulating such interaction.

5 (Chp.6, p.74) Holland uses the term 'realistic' to refer to a personality type which is not to be confused with Ginzberg's 'realistic stage' of vocational development.

6 (Chp.6, p.76) Interview transcripts were coded. In this case 5ME9 represents - year 5, mechanical engineering, respondent number 9.

7 (Chp.6, p.76) Although question 1 on the interview schedule is phrased Why do you want to enter...? it seemed more 'natural' to ask final year respondents Why did you want to enter...? because they were near course completion, and in some cases were engaded in seeking employment.

8 (Chp.6, p.77) Where a dash appears this indicates a detectable (but untimed) hesitation.

9 (Chp.6, p.79) Where (inaud) or (inaud several secs) appears this means that the tape-recording was inaudible at that point.

10 (Chp.6, p.84) Identifying references have been removed with descriptions substituted in their place.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Course, year, age

1. Why do you want to enter the field of mechanical engineering/nursing?

2. Do you think particular qualities are required to be a mechanical engineer/nurse?

3. How did you arrive at your decision to aim for this occupation? (carreers advisers, literature, etc.)

4. Why did you choose to do this course as opposed to the HND/RGN course? (sandwich/non-sandwich)

5. Do you think it is a popular course?

6. What can you tell me about the work of a mechanical engineer/nurse? (branches involved, 'typical' work involved, etc.)

7. Do you think most people understand what mechanical engineering/nursing involves?

8. Have you thought of any area you would want to specialize in?

9. Did you consider salary and job prospects?

10. Why do you think there are so few women in mechanical engineering/men in nursing?

11. Do you think female engineers/male nurses bring any different qualities to the job?

12. What sort of expectations did you have about the training placements before they began?

13. Did your experience of these placements match or differ from your expectations?

14. Have your views about mechanical engineering/nursing changed as a result of your work experience?

15. Can you tell me what you think is involved in nursing/mechanical engineering?

16. Why do you think people want to become nurses/mechanical engineers?

17. Why do you think there are so few men in nursing/women in mechanical engineering?

Questions 12-14 asked of final year students only.

APPENDIX 2

SPECIMEN TRANSCRIPT

CODE: 4NRS1
AGE : 21
SEX : FEMALE

Int: Why did you want to enter the field of nursing?

Resp: Well originally I mean I'd always wanted to be a nurse, it's a calling from when I was very small, I've got nursing in my family, a lot of my family members are nurses. I mean, I think why I went into nursing was very different, before I started it was just you know you think of your angels sort of thing. Now it's more a case of thinking what nursing is and I enjoy....

Int: When you say before you started you think of your angels what do you mean by that?

Resp: Well I think you're thinking more about the Florence Nightingale image of all these little nurses running about, you know wiping the feavered brows and everything, you don't really think of it technical side of it, you think more of the basic nursing care, things like that. I enjoy the technical side of it as much as anything now, the challenge of being in a sort of a high-tech area and specialist areas where you've got to know it all.

Int: Is this something you particularly like about nursing, high tech areas?

Resp: Well I enjoy that as I said but I wouldn't want to work in any place where you're getting away from the caring as well. I mean I wouldn't want to get away from you know being able to sit with a patient. I mean every area you work in is different, I mean there are some areas or certain sisters who frown on you sitting with a patient and talking to them. It depends what you see nursing as, I mean I see that as very important, the communication side of things (inaud).

Int: The communication side of things, what do you mean by that?

Resp: Well being able to communicate with the patient and tell them, you know what's going on and what's happening to them and being able to comfort them and reassure them, you know just chat over their worries, fears discuss going home whatever, whatever is important at the time. I find quite often that takes a back seat in nursing these days because nurses are under pressure and they see that as there to be fitted in if there's time but if not what tends to be important is getting dressings changed, you know whatever it is they've got to do.

Int: Do you think there's any particular qualities you need to be a nurse?

Resp: Patience, I think you need patience.

Int: Why do you say that?

Resp: Because of the kind of work you're in, you can't be the type that's got to get things done here and now. You've got to be able to make priorities and say oh well this thing is going to have to wait, you know everything just can't be done here and now. I mean there's working with old people especially, with old people their behaviour is just competely different.

Int: Anything else?

Resp: I think you've got to care about people and be able to communicate with them, but there again there are some (inaud.) nurses and they're different (inaud.) they find it easier to communicate than do when they're out with a group of friends or something.

Int: do you think you need to be a particular kind of person?

Resp: Mhmm. I would say to a certain extent training does mould you because there is obviously socialisation like there is anywhere else, you do get the vibes of what's right and what's wrong and you do sort of modify your behaviour. But I think to start with you've got to have some sort of personality to go into nursing.

Int: How did you arrive at your decision to go into nursing? How far can you trace it back?

Resp: I honestly couldn't tell you, I mean as far back as I can remember I didn't want to do anything else. I was in and out of hospital when I was quite small and I think that really just put the cap on it, that was just all I ever wanted to do and once it was in my head there was no shifting it. I couldn't honestly say why or when it just...

Int: Did you talk to your other family members in nursing about going into it?

Resp: Not really at the time of applying because right from when I was small I used to play with books and everything that I had at home, you know I remember being really small and playing with all the nursing things that I had at home. I never really - it was just sort of expected that I would go into it, I mean when it came to the time I never really discussed it. all I discussed was whether to do my training or the BSc and I made that decision myself really.

Int: So there's no other area then when you were at school that you considered at all?

Resp: No.

Int: Why did you choose to do a degree course as opposed to the RGN?

Resp: Well at school I did quite well and the teachers were quite keen for me to be a doctor rather than go into nursing. And em, they suggested the BSc as - you know with the qualifications and with the needs tomorrow that the BSc might be needed for promotion or clinical teaching. I just thought well if I was capable of doing it, and they did say it was a better course, that I should go and do it. I did go to (city name) for my general training but they said, they recommended to do the degree as well, they said it was the best thing. I did have doubts to start with which one to do cause I really amn't the studying kind.

Int: Do you think it's a popular course, the BSc course, or nursing in general?

Resp: Nursing is a popular career. I think it's a (inaud.) that every girl has at some point when she's growing up, I think everybody considers nursing. I don't think it's as popular a choice now as it was, there's so many other opportunities now for females now, I think it's not as popular as it once was. The degree course, not a lot of people know about it and em, it depends who you speak to where you're going to get the information about it. Through the schools they'll be quite honest and encourage you if you're quite bright but if you talk to nurses a lot of them will try and put you off it just because the nursing profession just doesn't like this degree idea, the vast majority of nurses that I've spoke to told me I'd done the wrong thing doing the degree.

Int: And what was the reasons did they put forward for that?

Resp: A lot of them think it's a waste of time, it's em - the nurses are no better at the end of it and you get these first year BSc nurses that come out who haven't done their training and don't know a thing. And because they compare with the experience side of the general students after six weeks, they forget that these BSc's have been in college for a year and that they haven't been on the wards and they're comparing them to their students that have finished the end of their first year.

Int: What do you or would you say to them when they say that to you?

Resp: Now I would challenge them and say that but earlier on in the course everybody is the same and they don't discuss it they just crawl into the background. But you've to just try and prove yourself that you're not like the rest of them, you just even agree with them and say I know some of them are like that but give me a chance.

Int: What would you say to persuade them that the BSc course is a good course?

Resp: It's difficult to try and put forward the pros and cons because we don't know about the general course, I mean maybe to be fair you'd have to study what the three year module consists of as well. I mean you could sort of say the good points of the degree, (inaud.) we're doing this extra theory, the practical is the same and the clinical experiece is exactly the same but over four years

instead of three years. We've got this extra theory, I mean all this change in nursing it's seen as a profession now and not as the doctor's hand maidens - that nurses need this extra knowledge and all the changes, you know the models of nursing (inaud.)

Int: What about when you finish, do you think the degree will advance you in your career any faster than doing the other course?

Resp: No that really didn't ever come into it because well even now I don't believe I want to go any further than a sister, I mean if I did it would be into clinical teaching rather than into... I feel the further you get up the more you get away form patients and it's more in administration, I'm not really keen on it at all. So I've never really thought of it that way.

Int: What about pay, did that enter your thinking?

Resp: I think you're aware of it all the time when you're coming through the course, you know you're doing a four year course and you're going to come out on a low wage and it's a lot of work for very little pay. But I don't think it really sinks in cause while we're working just now we're well-off when we're working and I think it's going to be once we actually are through and people who we've come through college with in accounts or business studies have got their quite good jobs that we're going to then stop and think, you know what they're getting for the same time in... But I mean it's job satisfaction as well, it's not just the money.

Int: Where do the satisfactions lie then in nursing?

Resp: Well I think a lot of you can see just now with these strikes that are going on, the nurses saying it's not the pay it's the sevice they're working in, they're all leaving for the private sector side. They could cope with the low pay, it's the shift work and not having the facilities and there's always new equipment needed for patients and you can't get hold of it and it must be really frustrating knowing you're trained to do something and you can't do it as well as you could do because you don't have the resources. I think that would what would be more satisfying, being able to do your job properly cause I mean you know the difference of a night when you come off the ward and you think everything went well today, I did everything that I should have done compared to a day when you're worrying if you managed to get everything done and did you remember to connect Mrs B or whatever before you went off duty, you know. I think that's what would get to you more than the pay cause I mean it's not brilliant but it's reasonable I think for a female, it's not as bad for a man cause I mean if we marry it'll be a second wage in the house, it wouldn't be a case of men being the bread winner, I think it would be more worrying for a male than a female nurse.

Int: If I asked a cross section of people and asked them what they thought nurses do, what do you think they would say?

Resp: Look after the sick. I think it would all be orientated around the hospital nurse looking after the sick person in hospital. I don't think the sort of prevention, health education or anything would come into it unless they had contact with the likes

of say a nurse sister, that might be mentioned but I think it would be very much focus on the hospital nurse (inaud.).

Int: What sort of image do you think they would have of a nurse?

Resp: I think the image still is of being the doctor's hand maiden, you know helping the doctor. I don't think very many people see nurses as knowing that much, you know actually with their own body of knowledge. I think they think of them as providing the basic care, you know toileting and washing them.

Int: Why do you think there are so few men go into nursing?

Resp: I think the money must come into it because even on a charge nurse's wage it would be hard to have a house. An intelligent man that's got his three or four highers could go on to do something else. I think it would be a difficult decision to make, you really would want to do nursing before you went into it, you wouldn't be doing it for any career prospects, money or whatever. And just, I mean the attitude toward male nurses, I mean you get all this, you know they must be gay or something, it's just the attitude towards them. It's not a career I don't think that's pushed for, I don't think anybody would suggest it at school unless they came forward and said, and I think they would be discouraged by their family and their peer group and they'd be teased a lot.

Int: Do you think male nurses bring anything different to the job?

Resp: What do you mean for the patients or hospital?

Int: Do you think they bring any different qualities to the job or are they much the same as female nurses?

Resp: Well you're all there to do the same job, em I think in the same respect as an old lady might not want a male nurse, there's found to be times when a male patient doesn't want a female nurse. I think that there should be male nurses for caring for these patients. They've sometimes got a different outlook on them, I've found working with male nurses that they're quite often better in an emergency than females, not more level-headed, the female nurses cope just as well but I don't know I just think they have a different outlook in the way that they handle things.

Int: I'll ask you about your placements. What sort of expectations did you have about these placements before they began?

Resp: Well I think before you start - I mean a lot (inaud.) you don't have a clue what you're going into but you still think about when you've seen visiting people in hospital or being in hospital as a patient yourself. You don't really think you're going to have that much responsibility when you go on but it's frightening how much even as a first year the responsibility that's placed on you. I think you think you're going to get more supervision than you do. I also think you that you expected a better tie up between college and the work place, you know it would sort of be a continuation whereas I think the (inaud. several seconds) But em, they expect that to carry on and be one thing but it's really two separate paths, I mean you go out there and you come back to college and

it's two - it's like you've got two different careers really, you're a student and you're on the wards, it's not like one continual learing process.

Int: So when you're here do you think of yourself as a trainee nurse or a Dundee Institute of Technology student?

ST: A Dundee Institute of Technology student, very much. I mean unless you're out on a clinical visit there's no contact with the hospital, the only time you're in them is (inaud.) You don't see any other nurses going to work in the moring, you don't see any of the hospital side of things at all. I mean it's obviously (inaud.) your degree then your practical, that is all in first year in the college and you practice all the different techniques and it is very much more like a student life here.

Int: What is the typical kind of work that nurses do in general, a typical day?

Resp: Just any day in a general ward?

Int: Anywhere at all, anywhere you like?

Resp: Well your day would consist of getting the patients up, feeding them, washing them, caring for wounds or whatever and those that have to be given medicines, em preparing for the doctors' rounds, that takes top priority, that's got to be fitted in, then if there's patients to be (inaud.) getting them all fitted in. I mean it's really a case of sitting down and making priorities for the day and fitting what's got to be done when, you know working your day aroud that. The area that you work in, it really depends a lot on that, in a surgical ward they've maybe got very srtict guidlines to go by. this patient's got to go to theatre at this time whereas working in a psychiatric unit it's maybe more flexible, you know if something crops up you just deal with it there and then. But generally I would say that the priority for the day is to get the treatment he's been prescribed and make sure that he's comfortable.

Int: To come back to something you said earlier, you said the technical side. How does that fit in with washing patients and feeding them?

Resp: Well it can all be fitted in, you know I don't think it should be seen as two separate - you know whereas in certain wards now you're going to get patient-centred care and I think that's a lot better because the nurse is responsible for total care. That means you could get them up, wash them, do their wound dressing, change their drips or whatever and make them comfortable all at the same time. But in a task-orientated ward they have the student nurse who comes along and baths them, washes them, the staff nurse comes along half an hour later and does their dressing, maybe somebody comes along later to check their drip. I think it's an awful lot better if you're responsible for everything because if you're just the technique nurse and you're coming along and your the one that they think's God and that you do all the fancy procedures, I think the patients put you on a pedestall apart from the nurses that come along and wash them and clean them, that'll be

the ones they talk to cause they're the ones that look as if they've got time for the patient. If you're looking after the patient and doing everything for them then they're more likely to ask about the technical procedures and whatever you're doing to them, they're more likely to enquire into that themselves, you know if your looking after them as a whole.

Int: I'll come onto the placements again. When you were on placement and you were actually on the ward, did your experience match or differ from what you thought it would be like?

Resp: Differ.

Int: What was it like then to be a BSc student on the ward?

Resp: Em, every ward you go into you've got a problem for a while. I mean I've been lucky, I could honestly say that I've never had any personality clash or anything. You quite often have a few who take a few weeks to accept you and you get this tag when you go on the ward and you've got this white cap with no strip. And em, to start with you are set aside, and well the students come and go from college all know each other even although they're not in the same class, they recognize the faces. We're very much the outsiders, I mean to be honest it's (inaud.) but it can be difficult and by the time you're finally accepted it's time to go somewhere else. It's the typical comments they come out with, you know do you really think you're any better and you know what they're going to say to you and you kind of get prepared for it.

Int: Anything else differ from what you thought it would be like?

Resp: Well I don't think the (inaud.) supervision on the ward. Your under the impression that the trained nurses take care of you but it's really an eye-opener to see the unskilled members doing a lot of the caring in the hospitals and it's quite frightening, I wouldn't be too happy to be a patient in a hospital any more. I mean you always have this impression that everybody knows exactly what they're doing, there's one way to do it and they're doing it correctly. But em, that was quite an eye-opener really, I mean by the end of your first placement you're put in charge of other students and are expected to know what to do, you know how to handle an emergency or anything.

Int: So in the light of your experience what are your views now about nursing?

Resp: Well I think my views on what nursing consists of has changed an awful lot, I see an awful lot more of what nurses do and not just what you see them smoothing down the blankets as a visitor or even as patient I don't think you appreciate fully what a nurse does. I think that what what I thought would have been the basics of nursing, like caring and communicating - I think all what I believed when I started is still true, I mean I still think the basics of nursing will never change. Even in the four years we've been nursing I think there's been a lot of changes in nursing itself.

Int: I'll move onto the final section then on mechanical engineering. Can you tell me what you think is involved in mechanical engineering? What does a mechanical engineer do?

Resp: Well I'd say he probably works in industry em, and is concerned with machinery and technology amd equipment. It's terrible my brother's a mechanical engineer.

Int: Do you think any qualities are required to be a mechanical engineer?

Resp: I don't know but I think the impression of mechanical engineers as sort of mathematically minded, you know physics and maths. Possibly good with their hands, I don't know.

Int: When you say good with their hand, why do you think that?

Resp: Well you think of them working with equipment, welding, you know all the different stuff that they work on. You think of it as being a bit of a craft as well, you know.

Int: Why do you think there's so few women going into mechanical engineering?

Resp: I think it's like the men with nursing, it's a thing we've never really been encourged in at school. I think it all goes back to school and in families - I can imagine at ten years old telling my aunite that I wanted to be a mechanical engineer she'd drop, you know. It's not expected - I think it's what you're brought up with whereas in a lot of other countries women are into engineering and construction work whereas here that's seen as a man's job. So I think that it would have to be maybe if you had somebody in the family or you had made contact with someone who's a mechanical engineer and find out enough about it to be interested in it. I think you'd have quite a hard struggle to get in, it's not as though it's a feminine job really, nursing's women's work, sort of caring like a mother's role, you know sort of carrying on a natural instinct to be a nurse. But em, mechanical engineering's seen much more as a manly task, there must be something wrong with you if you wanted to do something like that.

REFERENCES

Abraham, C. (1984) Problems in Categorizing Content: A Discussion of the Limits of Content Analysis. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society. London Conference, December.

Ashton, D. N., and Field, D. (1976) *Young Workers*. London, Hutchinson.

Atkinson, J. M. (1984) Our Master's Voices: *The Language and Body Language of Politics*. London: Methuen.

Atkinson, J. M. and Drew, P. (1979) *Order in Court: The Organization of Verbal Interaction in Judicial Settings*. London: Macmillan.

Ballantine, M. (1980) *The Application of Computers in the Careers Service*. Department of Employment, Careers Service Branch.

Bowers, J. (1988) Review essay. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **27**, 185-192.

Bruch, M. A., and Krieshok, T. S. (1981) Investigative versus realistic Holland types and adjustment in theoretical engineering majors. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, **18**, 162-173.

Cicourel, A. V. (1974) *Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction*. New York: Free Press.

Clarke, L. (1980) *The Practice of Vocational Guidance: A Critical Review of Research in the United Kingdom*. Department of Employment, Careers Service Branch. London: HMSO.

Crites, J. O. (1969) *Vocational Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Davis, D. A., Hagan, N., and Strouf, J. (1962) Occupational choice of tweleve-year-olds. *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 40, 628-629

Dex, S. (1985) *The Sexual Division of Work: Conceptual Revolutions in the Social Sciences*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.

Fiske, S. T. and Taylor, S. E. (1984) *Social Cognition*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Garfinkel, H. and Sacks, H. (1970) On formal structures of practical actions. In J. C. McKinney and E. A. Tiryakian (eds.), *Theoretical Sociology: Perspectives and Developments*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Gellat, H. B. (1962) Decision-making: a conceptual frame of reference for counseling. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 9, 204-245.

Gergen, K. (1985) Social Constructionist Inquiry: Context and Implications. In Gergen, K. and Davis, K. E. (eds) *The Social Construction of the Person*. New York: Springer-Verlag

Gilligan, C. (1982) *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Ginzberg, E. (1972) Toward a theory of occupational choice: A restatement. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, 20, 169-76.

Ginzberg, E., Ginsburg, S. W., Axelrad, S. and Herma, J. L. (1951) *Occupational Choice: An Approach to a General Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Gottfredson, G. D., Holland, J. L., and Gottfredson, L. S. (1975) The relations of vocational aspirations and assessments to employment reality. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 7, 135-148.

Gribbons, W. D., and Lohnes, P. R. (1968) *Emerging Careers*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Harré, R. (1983) *Personal Being: A Theory for Individual Psychology*. Oxford: Blackwell

Henriques, J., Hollway, W., Urwin, C., Venn C., and Walkerdine, V. (1984) *Changing the Subject: Psychology Social Regulation and Subjectivity*. London: Methuen

Heritage, J. (1984) *Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Heritage, J. C. and Watson, D. R. (1979) Formulations as conversational objects. In G. Psathas (ed.), *Everyday Language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*. London: Wiley.

Herriot, P. (1984) *Down From the Ivory Tower: Graduates and Their Jobs*. London: Wiley.

Hester, S. (1981) Two tensions in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis. *Sociology*, 15, 108-116.

Hester, S. (1985) Ethnomethodology and the study of deviance in schools. In R. G. Burgess (ed.), *Strategies of Educational Research: Qualitative Methods*. London: Falmer Press.

Holland, J. L. (1958) A personality inventory employing occupational titles. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 42, 336-342.

Holland, J. L. (1959) A theory of vocational choice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 6, 35-45.

Holland, J. L. (1962) Some explorations of a theory of vocational choice. *Psychological Monographs*, 76, no. 26.

Holland, J. L. (1966) *The Psychology of Vocational Choice*. Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell.

Holland, J. L. (1968) Explorations of a theory of vocational choice: A longitudinal study using a sample of typical college students. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 52, 1-37.

Holland, J. L. (1971) A theory-ridden computerless impersonal vocational guidance system. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 1, 167-176.

Holland, J. L. (1972) *The Self-Directed Search: A Guide to Educational and Vocational Planning*. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Holland, J L. (1973) *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Careers*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall

Holland, J. L. (1976a) Vocational Preferences. In M. D. Dunnette (ed.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Holland, J. L. (1976b) A new synthesis for an old method and a new analysis of some old phenomena. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 6, 12-13.

Holland, J. L. (1985) *Making Vocational Choices: A Theory of Vocational Personality and Work Environments* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Hopson, B. (1968) Key concepts in the use of psychological tests in vocational guidance. In B. Hopson and J. Hays (eds.) *The Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Hopson, B., and Hayes, J. (1968) *The Theory and Practice of Vocational Guidance*. Oxford and London: Pergamon Press

Horner, M. S. (1972) Toward an understanding of achievement-related conflicts in women. *Journal of Social Issues*, **28**, 157-176.

Howell, F. M., Frese, W., and Sollie, C. R. (1977) Ginzberg's theory of occupational choice: A reanalysis of increasing realism. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, **11**, 332-346.

Hughes, D. (1982) Control in medical consultation: Organizing talk in a situation where co-participants have differential competence. *Sociology*, **16**, 359-76.

Jones, E. E., and Nisbett, R. E. (1972) The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes of behaviour. In E. E. Jones, D. Kanouse, H. H. Kelley, R. E. Nisbett, S. Vallins and B. Weiner (eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning Press.

Jordaan, J. P. (1974) Life stages as organizing models of career development. In E. L. Herr (ed.) *Vocational Guidance and Human Development*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Katz, F. E., and Martin, H. W. (1962) Career choice processes. *Social Forces*, **41**, 149-154.

Katz, M. R. (1966) A model of guidance for career decision making. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, **15**, 2-10.

Kelley, H. H. (1972) Attribution in social interaction. In Jones, E. E., Kanouse, D. E., Kelley, H. H., Nisbett, R. E., Valins, S., and Weiner, B. (eds.), *Attribution: Perceiving the Causes of Behaviour*. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning Press.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marks, E. and Webb, S. C. (1969) Vocational choice and professional experience as factors in occupational image. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, **53**, 292-300

Mead, G. H. (1934) *Mind, Self and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, G. A., Galanter, E., and Pribram, K. (1960) *Plans and the Structure of Behaviour*. New york: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Neff, W. S. (1977) *Work and Human Behaviour* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Aldine.

O'Dowd, D. D. and Beardslee, D. C. (1960) College student images of a selected group of professions and occupations. Cooperative Research Project No. 562 (8142) U.S. Office of Education, Middleton, Conn. : Wesleyan University

O'Dowd, D. D. and Beardslee, D. C. (1967) Development and consistency of student images of occuaptions. Cooperative Research Project No. 5-0858. Rochester, Mich.: Oakland Uiniversity

O'Hara, R. P. and Tiedeman, D. V. Vocational self-concept in adolescence. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, **6**, 292-301.

O'Keffe, D. J. (1979) Ethnomethodology. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, **9**, 187-219.

O'Neil, J. M., Magoon, T. M., and Tracy, T. O. (1978) Status of Holland's investigative personality types and their consistency levels seven years later. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, **25**, 530-535.

Osipow, S. H. (1973) *Theories of Career Development* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Plato (1974) *The Republic* trans. D. Lee. Harmondsworth: Penguin

Potter, J. and Litton, I. (1985) Some problems underlying the theory of social representations. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 24, 81-90.

Potter, J. and Mulkay, M. (1985) Scientists' interview talk: Interviews as a technique for revealing participants' interpretative practices. In M. Brenner, J. Brown and D. Canter (eds.), *The Research Interview: Uses and Approaches*. New York: Academic Press.

Potter, J., Stringer, P., and Wetherell, M. (1984) *Social Texts and Context: Literature and Social Psychology*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Potter, J., and Wetherell, M. (1987) *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour*. London: Sage.

Roberts, K. (1968) The entry into employment. Sociological Review, 16, 2. Reprinted in W. M. Williams (ed.) *Occupational Choice*, London: Allen and Unwin.

Roberts, K. (1975) The developmental theory of occupational choice: A critique and alternative. In G. Esland, J. G. Salaman, and M. Speakman (eds.) *People and Work*. Edinburgh: Holmes McDougall and The Open University Press.

Roberts, K. (1981) The sociology of work entry and occupational choice. In A. G. Watts, D. E. Super, and J. M. Kidd (eds.), *Career Development in Great Britain*. Cambridge: Hobson's Press.

Rosenhan, D. L. (1973) On being in insane places. *Science*, **19**, 250-258.

Sacks, H. (1972) An initial investigation of the usability of conversational data for doing sociology. In D. Sudnow (ed.), *Studies in Social Interaction*. New York: Free Press.

Sacks, H. (1974) On the analyzability of stories by children. In R. Turner (ed.), *Ethnomethodology*. Harmonsworth: Penguin.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., and Jefferson, G. (1974) A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, **50**, 696-735.

Schegloff, E. A. (1968) Sequencing in conversational openings. *American Anthropologist*, **70**, 1075-95.

Schegloff, E. A. and Sacks, H. (1973) Opening up closings. *Semiotica*, **7**, 289-327.

Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G., and Sacks, H. (1977) The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language*, 53, 2.

Sharpe, S. (1976) *Just Like a Girl: How Girls Learn to be Women*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Sharrock, W., and Anderson, B. (1986) *The Ethnomethodologists*. London: Tavistock/Ellis Horwood.

Silverman, D. (1973) Interview talk: Bringing off a research instrument. *Sociology*, 7, 32-48.

Small, L. (1953) Personality determinants of vocational choice. *Psychological Monographs*, 67, no. 1.

Sonnenfeld, J. and Kotter, J. P. (1982) The maturation of career theory. *Human Relations*, 35, 19-46.

Stoney, S. M. and Scott, V. M. (1984) *Careers Guidance in Colleges and Polytechnics: A Study of Provision and Practice*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

Super, D. (1953) A theory of vocational development. *American Psychologist*, 8, 185-190.

Super, D. E. (1957) *The Psychology of Careers*. New york: Harper and Row.

Super, D. E. (1980) A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 16, 282-298.

Super, D. E. (1981) Approaches to occupational choice and career development. In Watts, A. G., Super, D. E., and Kidd, J. M. (eds.), *Career Development in Britain*. Cambridge: Hobson's Press.

Super, D. E. and Bohn, M. J. (1970) *Occupational Psychology*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth.

Super, D. E., Crites, J., Hummel, R., Moser, H., Overstreet, P. and Warnath, C. (1957) *Vocational Development: A Framework for Research*. New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Super, D. E., Thompson, A. S., Lindeman, R. H., Jordaan, J .P., and Myers, R. A. (1981) *Career Development Inventory*. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Tajfel, H. (ed.) (1978) *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. London: Academic Press.

Taylor, R. (1979) Career orientations and intra-occupational choice: A survey of engineering students. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, **52**, 41-52

Tucci, M. A. (1963) College freshmen and vocational choice. *Vocational Guidance Quarterly*, **12**, 27-29.

Turner, J. C. (1982) Towards a redefinition of the social group. In H. Tajfel (ed.) *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Utz, P. W., and Hartman, B. (1978) An analysis of the discriminatory power of Holland's types for business majors in three concentration areas. *Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance*, **11**, 175-182.

van Knippenberg, A. (1984) Intergroup differences in group perceptions. In H. Tajfel (ed.) *The Social Dimension*, vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

van Knippenberg, A. and van Oers, H. (1984) Social identity and equity concerns in intergroup perceptions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **23**, 351-61.

Vygotsky, L. (1962) *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Watts, A. G. (1977) Careers education in higher education: principles and practice. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, **5**, 167-194.

Watts, A. G., Super, D. E. and Kidd, J. M. (eds) (1981) *Career Development in Great Britain*. Cambridge: Hobson's Press.

Weinrach, S: G. (1979) Structural Approaches. In: Weinrach, S. G. (ed.), *Career Counselling*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wetherell, M. S. (1986) Linguistic Repertoires and Literary Criticism: New Directions for a Social Psychology of Gender., in S. Wilkinson (ed) *Feminist Social Psychology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Wetherell, M., Stiven, H., and Potter, J. (1987) Unequal egalitarianism: A preliminary study of discourses concerning gender and employment opportunities. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **26**, 59-71.

Wieder, L. (1974) Telling the code. In R. Turner (ed.), *Ethnomethodology*. Harmondsworth: Penguin